A Brief, Comprehensive History of the Cordovox and Other Electronic Accordions

by Fabio G. Giotta

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013
The text and dozens of photos contained in this article cover the history of the project and the people behind the World’s foremost electronic accordion, the **Cordovox**, along with the histories of electronic accordions made or marketed by other important accordion and organ companies such as **Farfisa, Iorio, Elka, Petosa** and others.

This is a work in progress that is subject to ongoing revision, expansion and enhancement. This version of August 4, 2013 is a revised, expanded and enhanced version of the original published in October, 2012.

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On the cover: The **Cordovox CG-7/Super V** accordion; the last of the REAL Cordovox accordions.

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INTRODUCTION AND SOURCES

Many technical and musical geniuses poured their hearts and souls into the design and production of these amazing instruments whose electronic technology originated in the late 1950’s, 60’s and 70’s; the Ages of Technology, Space and Jet Travel. The acoustic accordion technology (typically 5,000 parts in a full size instrument) spans from roughly 1900 through the age of its electronic counterparts.

This article’s text and its Photo Gallery endeavor to correct some of the rampant inaccuracies and invalid opinions about the Cordovox and other electronic accordions found on the World Wide Web and elsewhere, including some of the statements posted at Google Answers, and errant statements by some Ebay sellers and non-accordion oriented retailers, including musical instrument shops. As a matter of foundation for the electronic accordions, also included herein are condensed histories of related acoustic accordion models such as the Scandalli Super VI, the factories that produced them, and the families who owned and founded these important firms, such as Scandalli and Crucianelli. Herein, I opine and make a combination of declarations, observations, and well-educated guesses based on my own personal experience with these instruments, available, corroborating print and Internet factual information and continuing interaction with accordion industry experts such as:

Mr. Gordon Piatanesi - Colombo & Sons Accordions-San Francisco, California

Mr. Joe Petosa Jr. – Owner, Petosa Accordions-Seattle, Washington www.petosa.com

The curators of the Museo Internazionale Della Fisarmonica - Castelfidardo, Italia (International Museum of

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the Accordion), including Paolo Brandoni (Brandoni & Sons Accordions-General Accordion Co.), Fabio Petromilli (Comune of Castelfidardo), Beniamino Bugiolacchi-Museum Director, and colleagues

**Maestro Gervasio Marcosignori** - concert accordionist, arranger, recording artist, and former Director of Instrument Development for Farfisa S.p.A.

**Amedeo “Al” Iorio** - Syn-Cordion Musical Instrument Corporation, New Jersey

**Wikipedia-Italian**
http://it.wikipedia.org


**Chronache Anconetane** online newspaper
[www.chronacheanconetane.it](http://www.chronacheanconetane.it)

‘**Sound On Sound**” magazine July 2001
“Spiritual Enlightenment” - [www.soundonsound.com](http://www.soundonsound.com)

**Legal Force** (USA) web site - [www.legalforce.com](http://www.legalforce.com)

“**Su La Testa**” web site – Osimo, Italia
[www.sulatesta.it](http://www.sulatesta.it)

PDF of article from “**Strumenti Musicali**” magazine, June 2011  [www.suoniestrumenti.it](http://www.suoniestrumenti.it)

**Viscount International** - [www.viscount.it](http://www.viscount.it)

**Generalmusic Corp. USA** – [www.generalmusic.us](http://www.generalmusic.us)

**Ahlborn-Galanti** - [www.ahlborn-galanti.com](http://www.ahlborn-galanti.com)

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Suoni S.r.l. – www.scandalli.com

Pasco S.n.c – www.paolosoprani.com

www.contemporacorner.com

Arnold Berlin interview - www.namm.org

Business and Economic History On-Line, Volume 8, 2010: “The Day the Music Died”

PDF: “Lowrey History” by Frank Pungo and Bil Curry, www.lowreyforum.com

www.harmonycentral.com

http://moogarchives.com

Mr. Alessio Gerundini, C.E.O of Zero Sette Accordions, www.zerosetteaccordions.com

Organ electronics experts such as *Dave Matthews, *David Trouse, *David Tonelli and *Peter Miller, and study of written, official documents such as books, brochures, advertisements, owner’s guides, service manuals, and historical accounts, inlcluding the following:

The Golden Age of the Accordion—Flynn-Davison-Chavez,

Super VI Scandalli...Una Fisarmonica Nella Storia--Jercog,

Per Una Storia Della Farfisa—Strologo

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Left to right: Paolo Brandoni, museum curator and former C.E.O. of Brandoni & Sons Accordions/General Accordion and Angela Alioto, Esq. in August, 2012, during the famous “Round Table Discussion” with him and the other curators of the International Museum of the Accordion, Maestro Gervasio Marcosignori, and the author.

Special thanks to my “fidanzata” (Love of My Life) Angela Alioto, for the many trips to Castelfidardo, her photographs, and for inspiring and encouraging me in my accordion-related work.
BACKGROUND:

CHICAGO MUSICAL INSTRUMENT COMPANY, LOWREY ORGAN COMPANY AND FARFISA/SCANDALLI partner to develop, produce and distribute the CORDOVOX

The Cordovox line of electronic accordions was imported and marketed by Chicago Musical Instrument Co. which was also the parent company of Lowrey Organ Co., among other American musical instrument makers such as Fender, Gibson, Epiphone, Maestro, The Olds Horn Company, F.A. Reynolds Band Instruments and others. “CMI” was one of the oldest and largest musical instrument firms in the USA.

Founder Maurice H. Berlin was born in Romania in 1895, immigrated to the US in 1900 and went to work for Wurlitzer in Chicago circa age 13-14. This prompted him to take up a small bore horn (trumpet of cornet), and he played in the US Navy Band while serving aboard the USS Arkansas during WW1. CMI had been under the capable direction of “M.H.” Berlin since the 1930’s and CMI had been an importer and distributor of Scandalli, Settimio Soprani and Dallape accordions since its early days and decades later would import Farfisa organs.

In 1969, Ecuadorian Corporation Limited bought a majority share of stock in CMI. This company’s primary area of business was a beer brewery in Ecuador that was followed by cut flowers, and other Agricultural/Food products and commodities. Headed by Hope Norton Stevens, ECL now had controlling interest in CMI. Soon later, CMI’s name would be changed to Norlin Music Incorporated, an acronym honoring Norton Stevens, head of ECL, and M.H. Berlin.

Approaching the time of the introduction of the fourth generation Cordovox (circa 1974), M.H. Berlin allowed his son Arnold Berlin to assume increasing control of CMI/Norlin,
and ECL endeavored to add many of Arnold’s Harvard MBA colleagues to the management team. This younger and completely inexperienced crop of executives was aggressively focused on profit, and the new company tenet would kill many of the CMI held instrument companies such as Reynolds and Olds and would ultimately help to kill Norlin itself.

Later, ECL would become the target of hostile takeovers in 1981 and 1984, leading to the eventual sale of Lowrey Organ Co. in October 1984. I’m please to say that Lowrey is alive and healthy and remembers its involvement in the Cordovox project. Lowrey was purchased by Kawai Piano Co. in 1988 and continues to produce fine organs today.

**AUTHOR’S NOTE:** For more information about the development and debut of the 1st generation Cordovox and further anecdotes from Gervasio Marcosignori (August 2012), please see my bilingual article “Pilgrimage to Accordionland” & “Pellegrinaggio Alla Terra Della Fisarmonica”, available at the “All Things Accordion” page at: [www.caffetrieste.com](http://www.caffetrieste.com) and elsewhere on the World Wide Web

**SCANDALLI** accordions...“Fratelli Scandalli”

Silvio Scandalli and his brothers Enrico and Dante co-founded their “basement” firm in 1900 in Camerano, Italy, sometimes referred to as “ditta Scandalli”. These revolutionary instruments are often (rightfully) the standard by which all other accordions are judged. Scandalli invented and patented hundreds of mechanisms that were exclusive to his accordions, such as “strapless” bellows closure, and a two switch mechanism that generated 5 different registers with “window” type register indicators on the side (top) of the instrument, seen only by the player, and a modular, slide-out bass key mechanism. The attention to detail, materials, design, workmanship and level of refinement seen in their Super VI accordion as well as the pre-WW2 top of the line Scandalli instruments such as the 4/5 hand-made reed model
142R are unsurpassed to this day! AUTHOR’S NOTE: My 1939 Scandalli 142R (see photo gallery) was given to me by the original owner in the early 1970’s. Otherwise original, the bellows have been rebuilt and the bass strap has been replaced. It still sports its original black velvet straps. This “Art Deco” style beauty was Scandalli’s top model and also featured rounded piano key edges. It sold for $550.00 in 1939 and continues to play beautifully to this day.

The Soprani family firms (Paolo Soprani, Settimio Soprani) in Castelfidardo and Scandalli in nearby Camerano would make this small area the accordion capital of the World, forever overshadowing Mariano Dallape’s accordion firm and others further North in the once competing “accordion city” of Stradella, Italy.

The companies of Scandalli, Settimio Soprani (Settimio was the younger brother and former partner of Paolo Soprani, the Father of the Italian accordion in Castelfidardo) and Frontalini (this company withdrew from the merger after 1 year or so) merged in 1946 to form FARFISA (Fabbriche Riunite Fisarmoniche Italiane, translated: United Italian Accordion Factories), which would go on to pioneer reed organs (air/mechanical type: Microrgan, Pianorgan, etc) and later (++about 1-2 years after the development of the 1st generation Cordovox) designing the World’s first reedless, transistorized accordion, the Transicord, in the early 1960’s. It used only organ electronics-no reeds, yet used its accordion bellows as a volume and sustain/legato control. This concept has been used in 21st century digital-reedless accordions such as the Petosa Millenium (electronics built by the now defunct firm Logic System), the best and most accurate sounding, reedless, digital-sample based accordion to date. It was and also used, to a lesser degree, in the Iorio K Series Accorganette).

Based on the Transicord, the follow-up was the introduction of the famous "Compact" and "Compact Duo" combo organs which would launch Farfisa as one of the
World’s premier organ makers and one of the largest Musical Instrument companies in the World. Celebrated classical accordionist/virtuoso Gervasio Marcosignori joined Farfisa in 1947 as exclusive demonstration artist for the firm (and recording artist for Farfisa’s record label), soon becoming Director of Instrument Development (accordions, organs). His first technical involvement was with the development of Silvio Scandalli’s perennial masterpiece: the Super VI model, first built in 1948, advertised in firm brochures commencing circa 1951-52.

++At the time, young Marcosignori was told by Chief Operations Officer Paolo Settimio Soprani (grandson of Settimio Soprani) that, were he to take on this ambitious project, he should focus on making the Super VI an accordion that could not be beaten by any competitor, like an indisputable championship-winning Ferrari race car meant only for the race track ((and to worry about production issues and other pedestrian concerns later))....++per Gervasio Marcosignori interview in August, 2012. Marcosignori’s colleague, classical accordion music composer Gianfelice Fugaza joined the firm in 1956 as technical consultant and composed many works that would be recorded for the Farfisa record label and published under Farfisa’s music publishing arm (renamed “Berben” by new owner, Maestro Bio Boccosi circa 1956). Both Marcosignori and Fugaza were centrally involved in the Transicord project.

CORDOVOX: Roots and Pedigree

The first 3 generations of Cordovox outfits/sets were made by Farfisa (Scandalli acoustic accordion section and organ tabs), and Lowrey Organ Co. (outboard organ tone generator, amplifier, pedal, cables, etc). Some of the patented designs for the electronics were licensed from the Iorio Accordion Co. of New York (designed by Amedeo “Al” Iorio, grandson of founder Augusto Iorio, who immigrated to New
York City from Castelfidardo, Italy). Well-later, Iorio became known as the **Syn-Cordion Musical Instrument Corp.**

++Gervasio Marcosignori was sent by Farfisa to Chicago to visit the Lowrey Organ Co. and its engineers to develop the Cordovox CG-2/CG-3. The Cordovox organ section was based on the Lowrey “Holiday Deluxe” model spinet organ introduced in 1961, a follow-up to the original “Holiday” model of 1957. The tone generator was reconfigured to fit in a portable cabinet, and the amplifier was of an entirely new design in a second, portable cabinet, needed to make the instrument self-contained, like an electronic organ. Farfisa would later send the accordions to Lowrey for U.S. distribution of the Cordovox outfits, while CMI would send tone generators and amplifiers to Farfisa for European distribution. Lowrey actually had an organ engineer originally from Castelfidardo by the name of Gastone Baroncini who would perform minor pre-delivery repairs, adjustments, tuning of the organ, and even minor repairs and adjustments to the accordion itself.

*The first generation Cordovox is clearly Marcosignori’s “darling”.*

++Maestro Marcosignori was also a great fan of what would become a Cordovox exclusive feature for quite some time: the “Glide” control, actuated by a switch in the upper right side of the instrument’s volume pedal (an exclusive Lowrey innovation introduced in 1956). When the player moved his foot to the indicated area on the pedal, the organ would suspend any vibrato and sustain while bending the instrument’s organ pitch ½ step downward for emphasis. Releasing the slight pressure on the glide control let pitch, sustain and vibrato (if actuated) return to normal in an instant. *(Tastefully used, this feature could be used to great amazement to mimic the Hawaiian Guitar, among other instruments or ensembles).* Inexpensive and simple to include, the Maestro could not imagine why this feature was not routinely incorporated by future competitors (such as **Elka**) for many years, if at all.
Marcosignori returned to Chicago as demonstrator for the World debut of the Cordovox, which took place in a large hall. The Chicago audience, which included CMI founder M.H. Berlin (Note: Marcosignori was taken with the fact that, at the time, CMI owned guitar-giant Gibson), was flabbergasted at the variety, complexity and completeness of the sounds produced from this relatively small instrument. “With only five organ tabs, the instrument produced all these magical sounds”. Marcosignori was also taken with the quality and integrity of the Cordovox’s “piano” sound: “we added the neon lamps to the tone generator to produce the proper “sustain” (one lamp per voice tab, per note). Marcosignori enjoyed touring the U.S.A. to demonstrate the new, revolutionary Cordovox, and especially enjoyed his stays in San Francisco.

All early Cordovox accordions were fairly well-balanced, not overly heavy for their category, and used 3 reeds for the right-hand keyboard and 4 for the left. Right Hand: LMH configuration, that is, Low-Medium-High; the premium model with the Bassoon and Clarinet reeds in the tone chamber and the Piccolo outside the chamber. The standard version accordion, later to be referred to as the Super IV, would carry the lower outfit model number of the generation (example: CG-2 of the CG-2/CG-3 series), had no tone chamber, and used standard Scandalli reeds. It had a noticeably smaller body, a differently shaped organ tab control panel, a bass keyboard with black keys on a white background, and was slightly lighter in weight than the premium model accordion. Though there was nothing super or exceptional about it, the CG-2 outfit’s “standard” accordion was a solid, service-able instrument and was generally in sonic character with the premium version accordion, the Super V. It outsold the more expensive Super V by a healthy margin, and today’s marketplace of examples and audio recordings illustrates this fact.

The premium version accordion (Super V) with double tone chamber, hand-made reeds, and white bass keys on a black background panel would carry the higher outfit model

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number of the series (example: CG-3). The electronics used with both the standard and premium accordions were identical; only the outfit model number changed to designate which of the two accordions came with the outfit. The CG-2/CG-3 outfits offered only dry tuning in the accordions. Subsequent generations (CG-4 and forward), in addition to the standard/dry tuned accordions, would also offer musette-tuned versions (example: CG-4M/CG-5M) using two clarinet reeds tuned differently to achieve the Musette sound and eliminating the Piccolo reed (LMM configuration, that is, Low-Medium-Medium).

The premium accordions for the first three series also carried a special nameplate near an added, arched inset or recess in the nameplate section on the front of the instrument: “Super V”, and were slightly larger and differently shaped because of the tone-chamber. The Super V designation defines this special Cordovox model as a junior version of Scandalli’s World-standard, the acoustic accordion model “Super VI”. The Super V is a junior version because, among other differences, the Super V uses 3 reeds for the right-hand and 4 for the left, while the Super VI uses 4/5 respectively. It is important to note that the reed blocks for both these models are identical, save for the Super VI’s emblazoned marking: “SCANDALLI CONCERT INSTRUMENTS”. ++The Super VI and Super V accordions were made in a separate, purpose-built, small facility (“Special Instruments”) at the front of the original Scandalli factory grounds using exclusive craftsmen, parts and materials. For example, Scandalli carefully and meticulously aged their own, top-choice woods such as mahogany, maple, walnut, and beech for 10-15 years, and used the most select Goatskin chamois for the reed leathers, along with Swedish Blue Steel for the hand-made reeds.

The importance of the World debut of the electronic accordion with the Cordovox CG-2/CG-3 circa 1960/1961 led me to closely examine the internal components of my Super V accordion; I became almost certain it was made right along side the Super VI rather than in the main Scandalli factory,
though it is possible the electronics may have been produced and/or installed in the main factory or perhaps at Farfisa’s then new, large multi-instrument factory at Aspio Terme. ++Maestro Marcosignori confirmed this undocumented fact about the Super VI/Super V combination production line during a meeting at the Museo Internazionale Della Fisarmonica-Castelfidardo in August, 2012, declaring to me: (….other than by knowing what you know and doing what you did…”How is anyone supposed to figure it out?”

Not incidentally, CMI used the USA’s foremost “Hollywood Dreamboat”, razzamatazz, TV and recording star accordionist, Dick Contino, to advertise the original Cordovox in magazines. Contino had previously been advertising CMI's imported Settimio Soprani and Dallape’ accordions. His first “endorsement” was for magazine advertisements for Excelsior Accordions in the late 1940’s. Contino would later become a long-time, faithful Petosa Artist, which he remains to this day. He continues to perform around the USA on his Petosa Artist Model. ++Because Farfisa did not have much in the way of in-house resources for advertising the Cordovox across Europe, they took one of the early ads with Contino and simply pasted Marcosignori’s face over Contino’s!

With each successive generation, the organ control panels on the Cordovox accordions would expand and change to accommodate a growing number of “voices”, effects and other controls. From the beginning, the control panels were well configured and thought-out, and in the case of the Cordovox, usually sported color-coded, grouped sections of organ tabs for easy and fast on-the-fly identification (some of the 2nd and perhaps 3rd generation instruments had tabs were predominantly white, following the 1st generation tabs). The same was true for the Farfisa electronic accordion models, whose tabs were always color-coded and grouped by “family”.

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This was the only generation with the legendary, vacuum tube organ electronics, a two row firing cable, and accordion reeds dry tuned only; no musette tuning was yet available.

Vacuum tube organ tone generators and amplifiers have been long-hailed as having the best tonal qualities, and Lowrey was known for its incomparable, superior, substantive and highly distinguished organ sound, which became part of the 1st generation Cordovox. Given the proper respect required by tube electronics, these outfits were extremely reliable and easy to repair, even by the user-even on the job!

The CG-2/CG-3 amplifier used 2 full-range 12” Jensen Special Design speakers that put out an indefatigueable, deceivingly large, warm sounding 35 watts rms.

The optional, compact Cordovox CL-10 tone cabinet, a Leslie-clone, was available as a third electronic component/cabinet (“Leslie” type amplifier: a Doppler effect/gyroscopic type speaker system that creates a huge vibrato (ala Wurlitzer theatre organ) that is flung around the room by its motorized rotor speaker system, invented by Don Leslie in 1937 and closely associated with Hammond organs).

The CG-2 was later facelifted with dark, thin grill cloth and marketed as the “Electra” outfit, to be offered contemporaneously with the 2nd generation Cordovox outfits.

Not a full generation:

In circulation, there are also a few Cordovox amplifier and tone generator cabinets of an earlier, simpler (sans-silhouette) external design, sometimes referred to as a CG-1 outfit. Along with a prototype Cordovox accordion with a different, 1960’s Scandalli type block-letter font, the “CG-1”
accordion and cabinets are seen in early magazine ads with Dick Contino in Down Beat magazine. Likely little more than a polished prototype, the CG-1 outfit was a fraternal twin sister to the CG-2. Later ads for the CG-2/CG-3 outfits featured bandleader Fred Waring and his accordionist, Betty Ann McCall (see photo gallery).

++Recently, Maestro Marcosignori was contacted by an Eastern European accordionist who still played his severely crippled 1st generation Cordovox and was seeking repair assistance. The Maestro enlisted the help of a local (Castelfidardo area) organ technician who, with some minor repairs that included a few new vacuum tubes, had the instrument running at 100% yet again. The accordionist was in 7th Heaven with the renewed, full functionality of his vintage Cordovox, now about 50 years old! Some of us are fiercely loyal to our early Cordovox outfits; my two CG-3/Super V outfits are scheduled for full restoration during the next two years.


This generation used the CAG-1, a solid-state combination tone generator/amplifier in a single cabinet which had a solid-state amplifier rated at 85 watts rms and the best sounding speaker complement of its category: two 3” tweeters, a 9” x 14” midrange, and a 15” woofer that occasionally vibrated electronic components loose and knocked the instrument out of tune, though it generally held together well and sounded great. A three row firing cable and solid-state electronics became standard from this point forward. The accordion cables for the first three generations were custom made by Bell Laboratories. The CG-4/CG-5 accordions carried an updated design and offered more organ tabs (“voices”) than the previous generation, including keyboard Percussion, Wow-Wow, and 2 organ stop “Presets” (pre-combined voice tabs). The CG-4 standard version accordion was now referred to as the “Super IV”, though it had no “super” characteristics and was not marked as such. The new transistorized Lowrey organ section used in this series
had an exceptionally sweet, smooth, and well-rounded sound for its solid-state category. The Super V accordion still carried its unusual inset/recess on the front of the instrument.

The newer, larger Cordovox **CL-20** Leslie-type amplifier was available as a third electronic component/cabinet, probably manufactured by Fender, which marketed its own, similar Vibratone “Leslie clone”. It was rumored that this model was more “effective” than the smaller, original CL-10 model.

**Third generation: circa 1971: CG-6/CG-7**

The new outfits reverted to a tone generator and circa 200 watt peak power amplifier in large, separate cabinets with a different array of smaller speakers (the CXG and CXA, respectively). At this time, the Super V accordion was again revised and somewhat awkwardly moved its Super V nameplate in to the active center-grill area on the front, thus now making it awkwardly surrounded by the grill. Its characteristic, extended “arch” recess/inset on the front of the instrument remained unaltered, but the right hand body (cassa armonica) shape, control panel shape and depth and under-keyboard panel shape had changed and can be traced directly to the Farfisa Transivox TX-1 which would debut only a few years later. Even the model and serial number plate style and graphics mimic those of a standard production Farfisa instrument. The organ tab control panel remained largely the same as that of the 2nd generation.

**To summarize:**

All these outfits offered two acoustic accordion choices; the lower number outfit designation (ex: CG-4 in the CG-4/CG-5 series) is the standard accordion model (no tone chamber, standard reeds, slightly smaller body, bass keyboard with black keys on white background). Any Cordovox

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accordion carrying the Super V designation will have a double tone chamber and hand-made reeds, with white bass keys on a black background panel.

These Lowrey/Farfisa/Scandalli built Cordovox outfits are the only ones considered REAL. The next generation models would bring severe, negatives changes to the Cordovox line.

The fourth generation CORDOVOX accordions (circa 1974)

CMI’s new ownership under the new name of Norlin Music Inc. brought the 4th generation outfits to market. The CRD-A 210, 241, and 251 accordions were made by Excelsior, mostly using their medium quality reeds, while Lowrey continued manufacturing the organ sections based on the CG-6/CG-7, using the same generator and amp and cabinet configuration. These instruments were monstrous in size and bloated in appearance (see photo gallery), didn’t sound nearly as good as the Scandalli instruments, and were quite undependable. The 251 had a full-organ section and 4/5 sets of hand-made reeds but did not offer a tone chamber. The hand-made reeds were only marginally better in quality than this series’ standard reeds. The organ section debuted a feature known as E.B.O., a bellows expression concept invented and well executed in the early 1960’s by Farfisa for their Transicord. The Cordovox version of this feature was strangely configured and quite ineffective.

The updated electronic components in the tone generator, and especially those in the accordion, didn’t hold-up well, and the organ’s tone was a bit harsh and slightly out-of-character with the previous Lowrey electronics. It is important to note that some of the newly added and replaced components used in the 200 series were made by the “newer” Japanese electronics firms of the 70’s rather than by American electronics companies such as ITT. This was likely a Norlin directive to Lowrey in order to cut costs.
The model 241 included the tone chamber but only provided 3/4 sets of standard reeds (the opposite of the 251). Unlike the Farfisa Super Transivox, neither model offered all of the options in one instrument. The tone chamber made the 241’s Musette and Master registers sound lifeless. The organ tabs on the accordion’s organ tab control panel had long, rounded edges and protruded further outward than those of the Scandalli units and were so noisy they could be heard through the amplifier. Moreover, they were difficult to push, that is, they did not pivot (turn on and off) easily compared to the early Cordovox units. Simply stated, they felt “clunky” and insecure. The 241 and 251 models came with an outboard volume pedal. Starting with the 1st generation CG-2/CG-3, the accordion’s firing cable had been made by Bell Laboratories (except for the 210) and was connected to the tone generator. As always, the accordions themselves contained only a small part of the organ electronics.

Most importantly, during the 3 years of ownership of my Cordovox 241M, I never finished a musical engagement with the outfit fully operating!!! The introduction of this series spelled one aspect of the beginning of the end for both Cordovox and Norlin.

In all fairness, I must say that I found the CRD-A-210 with its downsized organ section to be decent and service-able, though considered a “junior” to the 241/251 organ section. Like the Farfisa Transivox, it had its organ tone generator built-in to the accordion and used a small metal cabinet (well smaller than a shoebox) for the power supply, which also housed the volume pedal. The under-keyboard panel had tuning ports that allowed tuning of the organ section without disassembly.

The follow-up model to the 210 was the CRD-A 215. Extremely rare, these accordions used the same general layout as the 210, but used only black and white for the organ tabs (like the early Iorio Accorgan, Series A through F), rather than the color coded groupings previously used by Lowrey.
The accordion registers remained in the same lower center panel location used by the 210, the register shift tabs were taken directly from Excelsior’s model 940. These tabs do not enjoy longevity and consist of a wood block interior glued to a plastic shell with small tabs that engage with the metal register shift slides. The tabs bend and break, and the wood blocks separate from the plastic shell.

Because of the erratic qualities and inconsistent service records of these instruments, the 200 series is impossible to grade as a whole, though it’s safe to say it would definitely not be well rated. However, I would categorize the CRD-A 210 somewhere between a C+ and a B- grade instrument. More about grading later.

**The 5th generation CRD-A 2000; a “swan song” for Cordovox**

The rare, elusive and bizarre model 2000 electronic accordion was likely introduced in 1979 and was a poor design attempt by ELEX of Castelfidardo (ELEX stood for Elletronica Excelsior, somehow related to Excelsior Accordions (more about ELEX later). It appears to be based on Cordovox 200 series Excelsior accordion platform but was a complete electronics layout departure from the 200 series. The 2000 used a round 30 pin firing cable and detent type round switches as organ tabs. It included Cordovox’s first rhythm section and had an extensive Preset section organized by colors and instrument groups. This bottom half of this instrument’s organ control panel strangely angled inward and the panel itself was a psychedelic nightmare. Moreover, the detent switches that functioned as organ tabs (push to engage, push to release) must have caused their share of anguish for those who played it. Finally, gone are all the conventional under-keyboard and center panel accordion register shift tabs; the presumed “standard” 5 registers are now operated by 3 organ style tabs at the top left of the control panel marked L, M and M+. The outfit consisted of an ouboard tone generator and a foot pedal/power supply assembly.
By this time, the **Elkavox 77** and **Farfisa Transivox** models had acquired substantial parts of the market formerly ruled by Cordovox. My educated guess is that the model 2000 attempted to aggiornate the Cordovox line in relation to the impending debuts of the **Elkavox 83/Iorio Accorgan H Series** and the **Farfisa Syntaccordion** (more about these models later).

It is peculiar that “in-house” organ producer Lowrey was not used for production of the organ section. Based on information presented at the beginning of this article, I speculate this was an intentional move by the young and inexperienced MBA laden management team at Norlin as a way to seek a better bottom line on the Profit and Loss Statement.

**Myths and little known facts about the CORDOVOX:**

Electronic Accordions: there is no such officially and publicly designated Cordovox electronic accordion outfit model as a CG-10, Super VI, Super VII. Finally, the only Cordovox Leslie-type tone cabinets produced were the CL-10 and CL-20.

Cordovox keyboards: Norlin distributed Cordovox keyboards and Moog synthesizers and combo organs, combining them in the brochures used during the late Cordovox/Norlin Music era when some **Cordovox CDX series keyboards** were produced. Norlin had purchased **Moog** in 1975. In collaboration with Moog, some Cordovox synthesizers may have incorporated certain Moog features. Keyboard models CDX-0612, CDX-0622, CDX-0632 and CDX-0642 were all built in Italy by **CRB Elettronica**; the Cordovox-Moog CDX-0652 was built **EME** of Recanati, Italy, one of the “accordion hamlet” hilltop towns near Castelfidardo. EME was owned by the Thomas Organ Co. Finally, models CDX-P425 and CRD-P423 electronic pianos and the CRD-0610 organ were built by **ELEX** of Castelfidardo, likely a direct affiliate or perhaps even a division of Excelsior Accordions. As we know,
ELEX produced Cordovox’s swan song CRD-A 2000 accordion and it also produced keyboards for Hohner.

**FARFISA in the 1970’s**

In 1974, to compete with the fourth generation Cordovox, Farfisa launched the **Transivox** series models which paralleled the early Cordovox-Scandalli accordions but utilized a full-compliment, updated, miniaturized tone generator on hinged panels installed in the accordion, behind the right hand keyboard. The only piece needed besides the accordion was the small Farfisa ATX power supply and volume pedal, and an amplifier of your choice. There was much less to carry, but the accordion was heavy and the generator access door behind the right hand keyboard could make for a somewhat uncomfortable fit against the player’s chest during use. The **Transivox TX-1** had Bass and Chord “Brushes” (as Rhythm/Percussion) and a full complement of organ tabs, but no presets. In addition, Farfisa included the Lowrey “Glide” feature and added vibrato and sustain features as part of the pedal actuated glide package, controlled by a 3 position knob. The updated **TX-2** with “retro” style chrome piping on the sound grille (originating from the 1939 Scandalli 142R accordion) deleted the Brushes and added Wha-Wha (same as Wow-Wow on the Cordovox), along with a few other, minor changes. The TX-2 electronics later became available with a tone-chamber in a hand-made reed version accordion: the **Super Transivox**. Along with the TX-1, Farfisa also introduced it’s Leslie-type amplifiers: the solid-state **RSC-180 (Rotating Sound Cabinet)** with a modern, coaxial bass/midrange driver and a separate tweeter, all using a single rotor), followed by the larger, tube-amplified, **RSC-350** circa 1976 (with three discrete speakers and twin rotors). The RSC-180 sounded unusually sweet and smooth for a solid-state amplifier, was well designed and built, dependable, and easy to service. ++Gervasio Marcosignori was the lead in the Transivox and Syntaccordion projects, and is quite proud of
the end-result of both these projects. The **Syntaccordion** would be his last electronic accordion project for Farfisa.

Later in this decade, with the dawn of analog synthesizers looming, Farfisa introduced the **Syntaccordion** series. The organ tab layout and coloring changed substantially, presets were added, and the beginning of player programmability arrived. Many of these survive today, though I am not familiar with the timbral characteristics of this instrument or the details of its operation.

Both the Lowrey and Farfisa organ sections produced exquisite tones with superior timbre, with the Lowrey organs generally exhibiting the “fuller” sound of the two (Flute section), while the Farfisa generally had a somewhat sweeter sound. The Cordovox Bass section, specifically the 8’ bass, sounded extraordinarily realistic, like a bass violin (upright bass), and the Transivox mimicked this bass sound very, very closely.

Of the “pure” electronic organ based accordions where the player would flip organ tabs/stops on the fly ala electronic console organ, with few or no presets (pre-synthesizer era), the first three generations of the Cordovox and the Farfisa Transivox TX-1, TX-2 and Super Transivox were outstanding acoustic and electronic instruments; the ultimate incarnations of the electronic accordion that pioneered the class. **I rate them as Grade A**; the highest grade achievable per the original general grading standards of my youth.

**CRUCIANELLI, ELKA, CRUMAR AND GALANTI/GEM**

**BACKGROUND**: Through the Generations: Crucianelli Accordions, Galanti Accordions and their spinoff companies
Family Patriarch and Accordion Pioneer: Cavalliere Sante’ Crucianelli

During the early years of the boom created by the Paolo Soprani firm, Crucianelli Accordions was founded in 1888 by accordion pioneer and former Paolo Soprani employee Sante’ Crucianelli in Castelfidardo. The firm later started to produce acoustic and electric guitars, likely in response to the advent of “electric music”, a.k.a. Rock and Roll.

A collaboration was established between Crucianelli and the circa 1948 spinoff accordion firm PANcordion of New York, founded by former Excelsior Accordions-NY co-founder Roberto Pancotti and his brother Archimede. Accordion master Pietro Frosini’s brother Natale, and famed accordionist Charles Magnante’s brothers, John and Angelo were also involved in this important venture. The collaboration would bring a renewed and expanded presence of Crucianelli accordions to the USA by the late 1950’s under the brand names/model lines PanItalia, PanJet and Crucianelli. Roberto left his well-established, famous company and his brother, Excelsior co-founder Egisto Pancotti to set-up Pancordion’s manufacturing facility in the former Wurlitzer accordion factory in Long Island City, New York. Pancordion premium model American made instruments such as the Baton were endorsed and played on television by Myron Floren and Lawrence Welk and were also played by other famous accordionists.

Crucianelli founder Sante’ died in 1970; the Crucianelli firm was active until 1971. Sante’s son Mario will revive the family name as part of an entirely new venture in the next few years.

There is much more to Pancordion’s history, but we will save that for another article.

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013
MORE BACKGROUND:

Galanti, G.E.M/Generalmusic and L.E.M

Galanti Accordions of Mondaino (Rimini) was founded by brothers Antonio and Egidio Galanti in the late 1800’s and remained in business until 1974.

In 1959, Egidio Galanti and his sons Matteo and Marcello founded “G.E.M” (Galanti Egidio-Mondaino) in San Giovanni in Marignano to produce electronic organs. The eight person firm also produced electric guitars and amplifiers. GEM would go on to produce electric guitars for Eko and electric organs for Thomas, Baldwin and Vox. In 1969, GEM started a new brand called L.E.M. (electro musical laboratories) expressly for marketing mixers and Public Address equipment. GEM will become a staple professional brand in Europe.

Son Marcello Galanti’s spinoff: INTERNATIONAL ELECTRONICS S.p.A AND VISCOUNT:

In 1969, not long after the launch phase of GEM, son Marcello Galanti left the organization to form International Electronics, specializing in portable electronic organs. This firm did well in the U.S. and Holland markets. In 1999, Marcello’s children Mauro and Loriana would change the name to Viscount and continue the music-related family tradition that dated back to Galanti founders Antonio (Great Uncle) and Egidio (Grandfather). The firm has produced liturgical organs, P.A. equipment and other items and remains alive and well as of this writing (www.viscount.it).

BACK AT GEM:

At the beginning of the 1980’s GEM acquires Schulze-Pollman pianos and starts production of these pianos at Bolzano. In 1989, GEM, also known as Generalmusic will acquire Elka from majority stockholder Piero Crucianelli.

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013
GEM started to fail in December of 2008 and fired all its employees in February 2009, letting all its brands disappear from the market, including GEM, LEM and Elka. Bankruptcy was finally declared in 2011.

As of this writing, an American importer/distributor in Bensenville, Illinois maintains a web site under Generalmusic using the GEM logo and lists GEM instruments (Genesys synthesizer workstations, Promega Digital pianos, and other models) but provides no historical background information, direct or international contact information, but does provide an email address to allow interested parties to inquire about the location of a local GEM dealer. Ahlborn-Galanti (liturgical organs), which at its History web page amiguously traces its roots back to Galanti Accordions via GEM and its American counterpart, is currently an active division of Generalmusic USA. Daniele Galanti, great grandson of Egidio Galanti, is the President of Generalmusic USA.

ELKA AND CRUMAR: A Family Affair with more spinoffs

ELKA is an acronym for “elletronica” (electronics) and “Castelfidardo”, phonically pronounced with a K. The company was born in 1965, founded by Sante’ Crucianelli’s son, Mario Crucianelli and his sons, Sante’s nephew Piero Crucianelli (60% shareholder), heirs of Filippo Crucianelli (Mario’s brother), and Nazzareno Orlandoni (who also founded “Orla” in 1965, manufacturer of all classes of electronic organs and now digital pianos and MIDI units). ELKA was located in Via Mateotti, near the antique archway “Porta Marina” leading to Castelfidardo’s historic hilltop town center, in part of the very same building which housed Family Patriarch Sante’s “Crucianelli Accordions”.

The ownership was focused solely on the expanding electronic organs and sector, attempting to follow in the progressive footsteps of the giant: Farfisa. Elka would go on to be a major World player in the keyboard sector with their
Violin keyboards, **Rapsody piano, Synthex** and other models which would become popular in the Rock music sector.

Elka’s first electronic accordion was the **model 60**, which was born in 1960, complete with 100 conductor firing cable (similar to the Cordovox). After a large gap in models, the next electronic accordion was the **Elkavox 77** (sister models **Iorio G Series** (identical accordion, organ sections), and **Petosa Series II** (electronics only), followed the the **Elkavox 83** (circa 1980), which incorporated rhythms (same as **Iorio H Series**, with the same electronics as the **Petosa Series III**). The next Elka models were the **F3** (introduced in 1984, likely the sister instrument to the **Iorio Accorgan Syntara**), the **S10** and the **S11**, followed by the new-era **Midi 1** (2 digit display) and **Midi 2** (3 digit display) models. Total electronic accordion production is thought to be a whopping 35,000 units worldwide.

Apprehensive of ongoing foreign competition and changing market conditions, Piero Crucianelli spearheaded the company’s sale the GEM in 1989, at which time he finally stepped down as company President.

As previously stated, GEM gradually found its own way in to a severe downward spiral by late 2008, taking down with it all its brands, and bankruptcy was finally declared in 2011, after a period of inactivity that started in February 2009.

Piero Crucianelli passed away in January 2012 at age 76.

**CRUMAR**

In 1971, Piero Crucianelli’s “Uncle Mario”, co-founder of Elka, would leave the firm due to family differences and would co-founded CRUMAR with partner **F. Marchetti**; the acronym’s origin is obvious. Marchetti soon left the management team, entrusting the entire company to partner Mario Crucianelli.
With respect to Piero, his uncle Mario’s firm started out manufacturing two manual portable organs, electric pianos and string synthesizers, combining the two in 1977 with the **Multiman**. Crumar worked on polyphonic synthesizers toward the end of the 1970's, (models **Stratus** and **Trilogy**). At one time, the company employed as many as 300 people in three or more distinct departments (research and development, body assembly-one platform with multiple models, organ, synthesizers,). The company would also collaborate with **Robert Moog** the the Crumar “**Spirit**” model.

In 1983, Crumar started producing “**Bit**” synthesizers, which would become an important and successful product line for the firm. These would be marketed in the US under the name “Unique”. The company would eventually license the rights to the **Bit 99**, **Bit 1** and the Crumar logo to Galanti/GEM’s “L.E.M.” division. Finally, Crumar also produced analog electronic accordions and later, synthesizer-era electronic accordions which incorporated a rhythm section.

During the late 70’s and 1980’s, the firm would also produce electronic accordion/synthesizers under the **CRUCIANELLI** name, the **Magicvox**, and would supply the same electronics to other manufacturers and importer/distributors such as **Excelsior**, **Castiglione** (Michigan), and **Bell-Duovox** (New York-New Jersey).

In the 1980’s, Crumar also produced an electronic **Baby Grand** piano that had been conceived by patriarch Sante Crucianelli specifically for the overseas markets.

**Trademarks owned by Crumar**

Previously held trademarks were likely transferred to Crumar by Mario Crucianelli. All were filed in 1968 and registered in 1970. It is clear that Mario was prepared for a possible and later imminent exit from ELKA.

**F.LLI CRUCIANELLI** (Crucianelli Bros.)
CRUCIANELLI & C. (Crucianelli & Co.)

CRUMAR
(Logo is a “C” with a small k inside formed by electronic components. This logo was used on instruments they produced, including the Iorio Accorgan)

Crumar would cease operations in 1987.

In 2008, an unrelated adjacently located firm, “BG’s” s.r.l. revived the Crumar trademark.

MANUFACTURER BRANDS VERSUS IMPORTER/DISTRIBUTOR BRANDS

My analysis of the facts, such as they are, dictates that Elka produced the Iorio Accorgan Series A, B and C (see photo gallery). The accordion bodies were still directly related to Iorio’s acoustic instruments, and the small, angled rocker switches are consistent with a 1960 design; the Elka 60.

The CRUMAR built Iorio Accorgan models

Beginning with the D series, the new Iorio body with the small, flat, Cordovox shaped rocker switches appeared. The Iorio E Series remained in production longer than the other series and included several variants based on the type of accordion section (example: Symphonic). The D, E and F Series were almost identical and very difficult to identify from one another, save for the introduction of a few more organ control tabs and related features of each series. These accordions were marked with a huge Crumar logo on the under-keyboard panel and were built by Crumar between 1971 and 1975-76. Crumar built these instruments in their entirety, likely having taken over some of the manufacturing facilities and staff of the original Crucianelli Accordions, which went out of business within months of Crumar’s launch.
Back to Elka:

With the introduction of the **Iorio G series** in 1977 (and parallel introduction of the **Elkavox 77**), a clear departure from the Crumar layout takes place; it was evident that **Elka again produced the Accorgan**! Iorio would remain with Elka for the successive, rhythm section equipped **H Series** (same as Elkavox 83), would introduce more programmability with the **I Series**. The Accorgan would even more fully enter the synthesizer era and MIDI era with the **J Series** (same as Piermaria Stage 1), which, like the fully digital, reedless **Iorio K Series Accorganette (KSR-15)**, was manufactured by neither Elka nor Crumar, but rather by two of the newer generation, digital electronics and accordion firms, **Musictech** and **S.E.M.** (Societa Europea Musicale), respectively.

The Newer Generations: Trying to Maintain Traditions

Iorio also brought other K Series models to market, built under the previously mentioned collaboration: the **KM Series** (acoustic accordion plus Midi) and the **KS Series** (acoustic accordion plus synthesizer plus Midi). Based on my best information, this was last Iorio Accorgan series produced.

Classical accordionist Mirco Patarini’s firm **Menghini** would acquire S.E.M. in 2005 to form **Suoni S.r.l.**. Menghini had previously bought out **Farfisa’s** inventory and intellectual interest in **Scandalli** and hired the last remaining Farfisa employees to continue the production of the Scandalli Super VI and other models in 1995, later also acquiring the **Paolo Soprani** trademark. Suoni S.r.l. has stopped directly marketing Soprani recently, and the Paolo Soprani name is now in the charge of a new firm named **Pasco S.n.c.**. All these firms are or were located in or near Castelfidardo.
Influence

It is clear that both Mario and Piero Crucianelli had much influence over their customers such as Syn-Cordion/Iorio and Bell, and that original Elka customers such as Iorio and Bell moved to Crumar and then back to Elka. In both the keyboard and electronic accordion fields, Crumar catered to a downmarket client who could never even consider purchasing a Grade A instrument. With Crumar’s lower price tag came lesser quality. The Crumar designed accordions rate a solid Grade C, the designs and finish work done by the “body and assembly department” at Crumar illustrate this. Some of the Crumar produced electronic accordions, such as the Iorio E series, might approach a B minus.

Though included in this section, the Petosa Series II and Series III accordions are really in a class by themselves, given they are exclusively Petosa designed and built accordions fitted with Elka 77 and Elka 83 electronics, respectively. More about these instruments later.

GRADE B INSTRUMENTS

In 1977, now under the continued direction of Piero Crucianelli sans uncle Mario, Elka entered the brand name mix by manufacturing and introducing their Elkavox 77 electronic accordion, and it’s sister instrument, the Iorio G Series Accorgan, marketed by Iorio Accordions of New York City/Syn-Cordion Musical Instrument Corp. Elka manufactured the complete instrument for their Elkavox line and for the Iorio Accorgan line. As previously stated, earlier Iorio Accorgan Series D, E and F (along with “sister” instruments under the name Crucianelli and Crucianelli Magicvox), circa 1971 through 1975/76, had been built by Crucianelli/Crumar until that company’s change of production focus toward synthesizers and later, digital keyboards, followed by their imminent demise circa 1986-87. This change may have been one reason that prompted Iorio’s
move from Crumar back to Elka with the advent of the all new 77/G Series. These newer Elka-built Accorgan accordions were bulky and somewhat awkward looking, similar to the Cordovox 200 series. Both the accordion and organ sections were well-more than decent in quality and were quite serviceable, but the organ tab control panels were not configured as well and the instruments did not sound as good as their Lowrey/Farfisa/Scandalli counterparts. The very early Iorio A, B and C series Accorgans (based on the early Elka model 60), the later E and F series models built by Crumar and the H series Elka-built Iorio Accorgans’ white and black, undersized organ tabs used a small font, were more difficult to identify and find, and did not pivot (turn on and off) as easily as those of the early Cordovox and Farfisa units. Perhaps the most popular series, the Crumar built “E”, widely illustrated this problem. This situation was temporarily improved with the introduction of the G series, but reverted with the H series introduced circa 1980.

The Elka tone generator, power supply and pedal were housed in one small, rectangular cabinet that lies flat on the ground, approx. 28” long x 19” wide x 9” high. The organ sounds were bold, dark and somewhat rough; they did not “sing” out as well and were not as refined as those of the Cordovox or Farfisa units. Finally, the organ bass these instruments produced sounded much more like that of their 1980’s Keyboard contemporaries: unrealistic, relatively harsh, boomy and bottom-heavy, most of which can be partly remedied with a good equalizer, thus, the lower grade of B. However, like the pre-Excelsior era Cordovox and Farfisa units, Elka 77, 83 model electronics (same as Iorio Accorgan G and H series) did seem to be quite dependable and serviceable. The Elka 77/Accorgan G was the last model considered to be a “pure” electronic accordion. The H series Accorgan with its small, stand-up generator (about 2’ x 1 ½”) introduced the synthesizer to this line, as Farfisa had done earlier with the Syntaccordion.
Petosa’s Unique Approach to the Electronic Accordion

Famed Italian-American firm Petosa Accordions of Seattle, Washington borrowed the Elka 77/Iorio G Series electronics (arguably the best voice tab combination and organ control tab layout of all Elka pure-electronic, pre-synthesizer organ sections), adding it to their own, custom-made accordion platform; thus came the Petosa Series II. Like the early Cordovox, the handsome looking Series II offered a standard version accordion as well as a premium version with tone-chamber and hand-made reeds. The limitations of the organ electronics, not the accordion, keep this instrument’s overall rating from being higher than a solid Grade B+.

Like all of Petosa's exquisite quality, Italian made/inhouse finished accordions (which very closely mimic their inhouse, fully hand-made instruments), the Series II and Series III accordions were made by Zero Sette (“zero seven”) in Castelfidardo, a firm started by seven colleagues and friends with zero capital just after WW2 (at that time in Castelfidardo, you were either a farmer or an accordion artisan/craftsman), thus the clever and unique name. In fact, Zero Sette has been producing most of the Petosa instruments for several decades.

Many of the strong points typical of a Petosa were incorporated in to the Series II and Series III: excellent overall build quality, agile/properly sprung keyboard, good weight balance when played, quality assembly, materials and finish. While Zero Sette produces truly good instruments under its own brand name, it is important to note that a Petosa Accordion is anything but a rebadged standard production instrument. Only Petosa designated and approved parts and materials go in to a Petosa accordion, and only the most highly qualified, designated craftsmen at the Zero Sette factory are allowed the privilege of working on a Petosa accordion. Petosa and Zero Sette have mastered their longtime collaboration to produce elite acoustic accordions that are second to none being produced today, and both firms are still run by the founders’ family members.
The Petosa Series III incorporated the Elka 83/Iorio Accorgan H series electronics which had progressed substantially toward the synthesizer class. As part of founder Carlo Petosa’s tradition since 1922, Petosa produced in-house, hand-made accordions until a few years ago. Today, I dare say that Petosa likely sports more highly-accomplished, long-time, documented artists than many major accordion brands combined. There are scores of loyal “Petosa Artists” such as Dick Contino, +Anthony Galla-Rini, my esteemed colleague Ron Borelli and, of course, yours truly…..

GRADE C INSTRUMENTS

Other contemporaries of the early Cordovox with much less technical, audible and visual verve and integrity….. the Bell Duovox and the later Bell Programmer model, probably their entry to the synthesizer era, very similar to the awkward Elkavox, was distributed by Bell Accordions of New Jersey and New York. Another was the Hohner Electravox, a vanilla-flavored, garden-variety, everyday, Chevrolet-grade electronic accordion. Though Hohner is alive and well, the reedless and bellowless Electravox is no longer produced. It is not clear whether a conventional version was available in the 1970’s

Allegedly, one of the men who was thoroughly involved with the development of the Cordovox for CMI later left the firm and went to Bell Accordions to initiate the Duovox project. The earliest Duovox seen likely consisted of a Bell produced accordion section with Crumar organ solid-state electronics, akin to the Iorio E Series Accorgan. Little else is known about the obscure Duovox, but Bell enjoyed a solid, if not nationwide reputation for their American-made (New Jersey, New York), acoustic accordions. Neither of these electronic accordions enjoyed the popularity of the Iorio and Elka model lines.
BIOGRAPHIES

The Author:

My earliest experience with a Cordovox was at age 4 ½, during my stage debut in a 1967 concert with Domenico “Volare” Modugno, backed-up by San Francisco Bay Area accordionist Val Valente and his CG-2, which was used for rehearsals, concerts and my first recording session (2 vocals) at major West Coast studio “Golden State Recorders” in San Francisco in 1968, at age 5 1/2. My first playing experience with a Cordovox, after only 3 months of lessons, was an impromptu New Year’s Eve performance of an Italian waltz on my accordion teacher’s Cordovox CG-5M “Super V” in 1971 - a 3 minute performance that changed my life, cementing my destiny as an accompanist, soloist, band leader, collector, restorer and perpetual student of the accordion. Broadly categorized, I have owned 8 electronic accordions since 1974, and still own some of these: a Farfisa Transivox TX-1, a Farfisa TX-2/Super Transivox, a Cordovox CRD-A 241M, two Cordovox CG-3/Super V outfits with extra components, a Petosa Millenium and a Petosa Series II. In addition, I currently own Scandalli, Excelsior, Petosa, Galanti, and Fratelli Vaccari acoustic instruments in full playable condition, and two keepsakes: a Sonola, and a Carmen (Hohner). I plan to purchase another Super Transivox to replace the one stolen from me, and perhaps a Cordovox CG-5M.

I credit two Italian immigrants, Michele Corino (accordionist, formerly with “Orchestra Angelini” and Cetra Records) and Nick Sfarzo (guitarist, mandolinist, father & “early” music coach of accordionists Angelo Sfarzo, an Excelsior Artist, and Ron Sfarzo) for the vast majority of my early instrumental study (1971-1976). Affectionately called “Nikki”, Sfarzo coached me in the areas of rhythm, tempo, chord progression and ear training throughout the years I performed with him in the 1970’s. Since then, I have been self-taught and continue to study both accordion and voice, believing in the ongoing space and continual need for
improvement and enhancement. I am also a member of the historic American Accordionists’ Association and San Francisco Accordion Club.

My instrumental repertory has covered Opera to Jazz, Country & Western to Show Tunes, Italian and other European Folk and semi-classical material, American Standards and even Oldies Rock and Roll (specifically on the Cordovox). I am also an operatically trained vocalist, but now specialize in Great American Songbook, Show Tunes and Italian ballads.
The author (center) on his Cordovox CG-3/Super V, as he leads the band, accompanying Caffe Trieste founder “Papa Gianni” Giotta during the Caffe Trieste Saturday Concert, circa 1990. The accordionist at right is Ron Sfarzo.

The author (left) and brother Gianfranco (center), Caffe Trieste Saturday Concert, circa 1998
Caffe Trieste Saturday Concert circa 1972, my very early days in the band (at right). Nick Sfarzo on guitar. Photo by Pulitzer Prize winner Joe Rosenthal

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013
Finally, as a vocalist and accordionist, I’ve been graced with the opportunities to perform on film, television, radio, internet and stage with and for singers such as Claudio Villa, Luciano Pavarotti and Frankie Laine, with my own bands and backed-up by bands and orchestras such as those of Sal Carson, Ernie Heckshire, Dick Bright, and the San Francisco Opera in the top hotel, auditorium, theater, club and show venues in Northern California, including Candlestick Park and Davies Symphony Hall.

My behind-the-scenes experience includes that of record producer and recording engineer. I am also the youngest member of the Giotta Family, (based in San Francisco, CA) which founded the first Espresso coffee house on America’s West Coast in 1956: Caffe Trieste (now a growing retail chain with wholesale and online distribution under the direction of my sister and myself.) My father, founder “Papa Gianni Giotta”, together with my brother *Gianfranco, established what continues to be the longest running musical show in San Francisco, the Caffe Trieste Saturday Concert. In addition to my father and brother (*1944-1999), our cast also includes my mother Ida and sister Sonia, along with a roster of guest singers and instrumentalists. Under my direction, our show covers a wide range of repertory, and the band is replete with two accordions. The family also operates a large recording studio (Trieste Recording Studios), has produced record albums and videos under the TRIESTE RECORDS label, and has made thousands of appearances in all types of media, film and on concert stages since 1953.

*Experts, from page one:

**Dave Matthews:** independent organ repairman for Bob Berry’s World of Organs-Santa Clara, CA, last based in Fresno, CA as Organ Repair Service. Dave worked on my 1956 Allen S-12-S Rondo organ and was extremely knowledgeable of Allen, Thomas, Lowrey and other organs. After my introduction of
the Cordovox to him, he became an expert with my CG-3 outfits. Dear Dave passed-on suddenly, in the mid 1990’s.

**David Trouse**: Road tour audio engineer for major, veteran rock and roll acts, digital and analog keyboard repairman associated with Zone Music in Cotati, CA, home of the famous Cotati Accordion Festival.

**David Tonelli**: Former senior electronics teacher at College for Recording Arts-San Francisco and recording engineer at Golden State Recorders/Sonic Arts Corp.-San Francisco, among other S.F. Bay Area studios. Tonelli personally built, operates and broadcasts from vacuum-tube driven KRKD-FM...Jazz 103 in Oakland, CA and repairs, rebuilds and restores musical instrument electronics, microphones and analog and digital audio equipment (both consumer and professional, antique, vintage and modern) as Aquarius Audio Service - Oakland, CA.

**Peter Miller**: Former junior electronics teacher at College For Recording Arts and a contemporary of David Tonelli at the College, founder of CAE Sound in San Mateo, CA. As a certified service technician for dozens of manufacturers, he rebuilds and repairs electronic keyboard instruments of all vintages both analog and digital, and associated amplifiers, including Leslie-type. Loudspeaker restoration, professional and consumer audio component repair, inventor and marketer of specialty musical instrument accessories. He has earned 2 gold records for his work on two Arista Record’s Grateful Dead albums and counts among his long-time clients The Grateful Dead, Huey Lewis, The Doobie Brothers, and others.
The timeless, smart looking Cordovox logo uses the same font style as Farfisa’s “Compact” and “Compact Duo” combo organs.....not a coincidence.
Castelfidardo, August 2012: The author (left) in deep discussion with Maestro Gervasio Marcosignori. Photo by Angela Alioto
Cordovox ad with Dick Contino, February 28, 1963-Down Beat magazine. Notice the prototype CG-2 accordion with the same style of nameplate used concurrently on the Scandalli Super VI.
Very rare Cordovox CG-1 tone generator and amplifier/power supply cabinets, as seen in ad with Dick Contino
Cordovox Price List, April 1, 1966
CG-2 outfit  The CG-2 was later marketed as the “Electra” contemporaneously with the CG-4/CG-5)
CG-2/CG-3 tone generator
The legendary 1st generation Cordovox Super V accordion (CG-3) I purchased this accordion and outfit in 1980 and in circa 1993 purchased a second, identical outfit as a parts set from Colombo & Sons Accordions; it became a fully operational back-up outfit. The second Super V accordion is now on display (as of July 11, 2013) at the Museo Internazionale Della Fisarmonica in Castelfidardo; it was the first true electronic accordion added to the Museum’s collection of 420 accordions. Photo by the author
Castelfidardo, July 10, 2013: Left to right: International Museum of the Accordion Director Beniamino Bugiolacchi unpacking the newly donated Cordovox Super V with the author. Photo by Angela Alioto
Cordovox CG-2-standard version accordion (Super IV)

CG-2/CG-3 amplifier and tone generator, with optional CL-10 “leslie” at right. Cordovox nameplate was pasted in to this photo.
A tip from Fred Waring:

"You'll be amazed when you hear Betty Ann McCall play the new Cordovox!"

Yes, you'll be amazed by the range and beauty of the music produced by the Cordovox... a completely new kind of musical instrument. The Cordovox is compact, versatile and completely electronic. It combines organ sounds and full accordion tones, thus creating a remarkable musical versatility. Cordovox uplifts the performance of the most accomplished musician, yet anyone can play it.

Simply set the keys of the Cordovox for the organ voices you want, or combine them for an endless variety of rich orchestral effects. Play the voices of the Cordovox alone (on the accordion keyboard) or in ensemble with other instruments. Or, if you prefer, play the accordion by itself (amplified, if you like).

Yes, the proof is in the playing, and once you've tried the Cordovox, we know you'll share Fred Waring's enthusiasm for this sensational new instrument. For an illustrated folder on the Cordovox, write Chicago Musical Instrument Co., 7473 N. Clove Avenue, Chicago 48, Illinois.

Cordovox CG-2 with Fred Waring & Betty Ann McCall circa 1964

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013
Advertisements such as the one shown above (full size version on the next page) were trying to put over the concept that with the amazing technology and versatility of the Cordovox, it was again “hip and cool” to play the accordion. Some of the Rock and Rollers understood this; John West, “electronic accordionist” for Gary Lewis and the Playboys played a Cordovox CG-2 on the bands hit songs such as “This Diamond Rind”, as evidenced by the album covers.
They laughed when I sat down to play the accordion

and then they heard the rich, warm sounds of a jazz organ, the throbbing best of rock 'n roll, even the strains of a Hawaiian guitar.

I was in with the 'in' group. And I couldn't have done it without my Cordovox.

That's because a Cordovox is the completely electronic instrument. It's more than an organ... more than an accordion. It produces any one of a dozen different musical voices in a split second so that I can play any kind of mood music that the occasion calls for. And, it's amplified to give me a fuller range of sound for any size room.

If you're like me, an accordion player who wants in with the 'in' group, if you're a guy who'd like to make a small combo sound like a really big group or if you're in search of a whole new sound... why not try a Cordovox? It's a heap of a lot more than just an accordion.

Cordovox

A product of CMI

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013*
Cordovox CG-4 organ control panel
CAG-1 combination tone generator/amplifier, for CG-4/CG-5 outfits

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013*
Second generation leaflet - CG-4/CG-5 and CG-2 Electra, circa 1967  Panel one

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013
The remarkable Cordovox combines real accordion sounds with true organ voices. With just a flick of a tab you'll have an entire instrument ensemble at your fingertips. An entirely new kind of musical instrument, the versatile Cordovox lets you solo with the accordion alone, or touch a tab and with little effort you have big organ sounds that will fill any room. You can amplify the

**SUPER V (CG-9)**
Super V features include:
- 120 bass buttons
- 41 treble keys
- "double tone chamber"
- Three sets of hand-made treble reeds with 6 treble registers including a master register
- 4 sets of hand-made bass reeds and three bass registers
- Jet Black.

**SUPER V-M (CG-8M) MUSETTE TUNING**
This accordion has the same number of reed blocks as the Super V (4 treble and 4 bass) however, in the treble section the Piccolo (high) reed block is replaced with a second Clarinet (middle) reed block, which is positioned out of the chamber. The Musette is most desirable when playing Continental-style songs, Polkas, and many other varieties of music.

The Solid State Cordovox Amp/Generator is the same for both Super V and Super IV.

Second generation leaflet - CG-4/CG-5 and CG-2 Electra, circa 1967  Panel two

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013 58
Second generation leaflet - CG-4/CG-5 and CG-2 Electra, circa 1967  Panel three
ELECTRA (CG-2)

Electra features include:
- 120 bass buttons; 41 treble keys; three sets of treble reeds with 6 treble registers including a master register; 4 sets of bass reeds and 3 bass registers. Jet black.

CORDOVOX CONTROLS
- Full 41 Treble Keys and 120 Bass Buttons
- Touch-lefthand control
- Four volume settings and sustaining effects
- Treble sustain, and electronic reverb
- Combination bass and chord volume tabs
- Treble Combination Tab
- Electronic glide control
- Bass sustain
- Volume control
- Two self-contained 12" heavy-duty speakers
- 30 watt amplifier
- Two instrument inputs

CORDOVOX CONTROLS
- Fretted Clarinet
- Fretted Flute
- Fretted Trumpet
- Fretted Violin
- Fretted Piccolo
- Bass Clarinet
- bass Flute
- bass Trumpet
- bass Violin
- bass Piccolo
- Bass Clarinet
- bass Flute
- bass Trumpet
- bass Violin
- bass Piccolo

CORDOVAN-LESLIE TONE CABINETS

CL-20

The exclusive Cordovan-Korning Sound System is specifically designed to handle the new high-powered transactors. Simply plug into the Cordovan Amp-Generator (with "EXT. SPEAKER JACKS") and you instantly hear those big Leslie tones that have become so popular in sitar organs and sitar organ performances. Select the tone you want; the choice is up to you. Tap on the right control of the foot-switch and you set your parameters. Tap again... and fill the room with the intensity of the exciting Leslie Tremolo. Tap on the right control for the slow Tremolo... hit it again and you have fast Tremolo. The brilliantly colored indicator lights tell you at a glance whether you're in the "faster" or "softer" speaker and what tone speed you're using. With this amazing footswitch, you really "know where it's at." CL-20 may be used with the Super VI, Super IV, and Electra. Jet black.

CL-50

Your music instantly becomes brilliant with the rich, full sound of the Cordovan-Leslie Tone Cabinet. With this exciting 5-speed unit, you can control both the intensity, utilizing Transducers for the subject rolling Leslie Wavemounter. Completely portable, conveniently operated. The CL-50 is designed for use with the Electra (CG-2). Jet black.

CORDOVAN CUSTOM STOOL

Six models on the Cordovan Custom stool and each model Custom designed for the Cordovan; this comfort-engineered stool is deeply upholstered in an attractive, heavy-duty vinyl. Lightweight for easy portability; all hardwood or chrome-rolled for long life and flexibility. The height is adjustable to fit your requirements.

Second generation leaflet - CG-4/CG-5 and CG-2 Electra, circa 1967  Panel four

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013
CXA amplifier for third generation CG-6/CG-7, also used with 200 series
CXG 3rd generation tone generator, used with CG-6/CG-7 outfits and 200 series
CXG control panel (CG-6/CG-7, 200 series)
Above: Cordovox CL-20 “leslie”, for use with 2nd and 3rd generation outfits and forward
Cordovox CG-7, the last Super V accordion and the last REAL Cordovox
Cordovox CG-7M Super V (musette version)
Cordovox CG-7M Super V organ control panel
Cordovox CG-7M Super V, 3 treble reeds/4 bass reeds
Cordovox CRD-A 251 from the Norlin/Excelsior era. Notice the girth, right hand grille height, the absence of the inverted color (white on black) bass keyboard and the typical Excelsior style flare of the bass side “cassa armonica” (body). Even the superb Cordovox logo was inaccurately reproduced.
Model 251 alternate view

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013*
Model 251, 45 degree angle view. Notice the Excelsior built models’ keyboard silhouette, the narrower black keys and the more prominent arc on the white key ends; these are all typical of Excelsior built accordions. Notice also the shape of the organ tabs.
Model 251 - 4 RH sets reeds plus 5 LH sets, all hand made. Notice the oversize body, as highlighted by the white closure gasket.
Model 251 – the fifth set of bass reeds is clearly visible.
CRD-A 241 organ control panel (identical to 251 panel)
CRA-A 241 - 3 sets standard RH reeds in a double tone chamber plus 4 sets standard LH reeds
CRD-A 210 single sided cut sheet brochure, the only piece of customer literature available; the same was true for the other 200 series models. The Farfisa/Lowrey era color + black & white, large 4 panel leaflets passed in to history with the last of the REAL Cordovox accordions, the CG-6/CG-7.
The CRD-A 215, the follow-up model to the 210, circa 1980/81, likely introduced in parallel with the CRD-A 2000.
Model 215 – Profile: notice the deep under-keyboard panel that house the built-in tone generator and the typical Excelsior style flared bass side body.

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013*
The model 215’s control panel.
The middle of the model 215’s control panel; notice the register shift tabs borrowed from Excelsior’s 940 acoustic model accordion.
Model 215 – 3 sets of standard RH reeds and 4 sets of standard LH reeds with no tone chamber.
The bizarre Cordovox CRD-A 2000
The model 2000 control panel, left half
The model 2000 control panel, right half
The model 2000 profile-notice the inward slant of the control panel
The model 2000 tone generator

CRD-A 2000 foot pedal and power supply
August 2012-Museo Internazionale Della Fisarmonica, just before the famous “Round Table Discussion”. Front, left to right: Gervasio Marcosignori, Paolo Brandoni-curator, the author. Back row: Fabio Petromilli-curator, Paolo Petromilli. Photo by Angela Alioto
Farfisa Transicord TD-50 (first model), the World’s first transistorized “accordion”, actually an organ in the body of an accordion, since it was “reedless”.

TD-50 control panel
Farfisa Transicord TD-54 “de Luxe” model with Percussion, etc
The handsome Farfisa Transivox TX-1

Farfisa TX-2 version-chromatic/button type (also known as the TX-5)

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013*
Farfisa Transivox outfit

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013
Farfisa TX-2/Super Transivox
The legendary Scandalli Super VI (third grill style, 1960’s nameplate style)
Farfisa RSC-180 Rotating Sound Cabinet – Left: Front view with foot switch panel, Right: rear view
Farfisa RSC-350 Rotating Sound Cabinet

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013*
Iorio Accorgan A Series (Elka 60) with wedged, rocker-type organ tabs

Iorio Accorgan B Series (Elka 60)

Iorio Accorgan C Series “Symphonic” (Elka 60)
Iorio Accorgan F series (built by Crumar)
Iorio Accorgan G Series (same as Elkavox 77)

Iorio Accorgan H series (same as Elkavox 83)

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013*
The Iorio Accorgan Syntara (likely directly related to Elka F3)

The Syntara’s control panel

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013*
Iorio Accorgan I Series

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013
Piermaria Stage 1 (same as Iorio Accorgan J Series, electronics by Musictech, accordion section by SEM)
Iorio K Series Accorganette KSR-15 (believed to have been built by Musictech and SEM, same as Accorgan J Series)

Elkavox 77 (same as Iorio Accorgan G series)
Zero-Sette Accordions-Castelfidardo. Private, factory tour July 10, 2013. The author (left) examines a premium Petosa reed block at the factory’s reed mounting and tuning section. Factory C.E.O. Alessio Gerundini (right) is clearly proud of his factory’s work. Photo by Angela Alioto
Castelfidardo, July 10, 2013, a chance meeting with one of the “magnificent seven” founders of Zero Sette Accordions, Guido Guidobaldi, who is also the uncle of the company’s current C.E.O. Alessio Gerundini. Left to right: Guido Guidobaldi, Museum Director Beniamino Bugiolacchi, the author, and Museum Curator Paolo Brandoni. Photo by Angela Alioto
Petosa Series II

Petosa Millennium (visually similar to the Petosa AM-1100)

Petosa Millennium Midi unit control and rear panels

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013*
Petosa Series II with stones and engraving

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013*
An early Bell DuoVox (probably a contemporary of the Cordovox 2\textsuperscript{nd} and perhaps 3\textsuperscript{rd} generations, likely a Bell accordion platform with electronics by Crumar)

A later model, Bell DuoVox “Programmer” (built by Crumar)
Bell DuoVox follow-up model to early DuoVox shown on page 104, a likely contemporary and competitor of the 3rd generation Cordovox CG-6/CG-7, circa 1971. Panel one

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013
Bell DuoVox, circa 1971-panel two.

"Duovox" is the latest concept of an Accordion-Organ combination instrument, completely electronic solid state (Modular Constructed) providing amazing musical versatility. The Amplifier and Generator are combined within one easy to handle unit. The "Duovox" will offer the beginner and professional musician alike a whole new dimension of sound, with a range of musical potential, unlike anything else he has ever played before.

The versatile "Duovox" can be played: (1) As an accordion by itself; (2) As an amplified accordion; (3) With organ sounds alone; (4) As an accordion and organ together; (5) And in many combinations of Accordion and Organ Sounds.

Simply set the voice tabs, or combine them, for an endless variety of Musical Effects.

*see biographies at end of article. Second Edition, Version 8-4-2013
Bell DuoVox noteworthy, but not necessarily positive characteristics:

In panel two on the previous page, notice the overly formatted (combined organ “voices”) organ tabs (pre-combined organ stops or “voices”) and the lack of a full Flute section with the normal range of footages (ex: Flute 16, Flute 8, Flute 4, etc), along with the three strange, organ-like accordion register shift tabs at the top left of organ control panel. About a decade later, Cordovox would copy these for their “swan song” model, the bizarre CRD-2000, built by Excelsior and ELEX.

Panels one and four:
In an opposite scenario, Bell decided on a single cabinet tone generator/amplifier design that the 2nd generation Cordovox CG-4/CG-5 had previously used and abandoned.
The Bell "DuoVox" is a full size 3 & 4 reed, Double Tone Chamber, custom lightweight accordion instrument.

What makes "DuoVox" different? Why is it recognizable so much finer? The answer is quality plus a host of Extras that add up to a world of difference.

Extras like: A Bell Professional Accordion with superlative handmade reeds and handcrafted walnut keyboard. Matchless performance of the three accordion reed registers providing seven different sounds. Perfect electriified accordion balance with the latest type (Recording Studio) slide volume and tone controls. Ten different individual organ voice tabs, including the exciting Quint voice for today's mod organ playing. And, when used in an array of combinations, the player has an endless selection of beautiful organ voices to choose from. Also, Reverberation, Rhythm Brushes, Pulsating Vibrato, Vibrato Delay, Sustain, Short & Long, plus Booming Organ Bass Sounds.

Bell DuoVox, circa 1971. Panel three
Attractive vinyl covered Amplifier-Generator all within one easy to handle single unit, complemented with Two Special Custom Designed Heavy Duty 12" Speakers. The 80 Watts of Music Power create a superb sound reproduction of breathtakingly clear highs and flawless lows.

"Duovox" offers the player independent volume and tone control of Mic Input which may be used for additional instruments or as a speaking microphone input, plus electrified accordion and organ volume and tone controls.

Bell... tells it as it is... "the subtle difference in quality." Try "Duovox" today... Compare it and you'll agree it has the Sound Quality and Features you have always wanted in an instrument.

Bell accordion
115 East 23rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10010
Patent Pending

Bell DuoVox Amplifier/Generator unit, circa 1971. Panel four
“Crucianelli” Crumar Magicvox-early model, circa 1971-1972 (sister instrument to Iorio Accorgan D and E series)

“Crucianelli’ Crumar Magicvox- (same as above) frontal view
“Magicvox” by Crumar, likely sister instrument to the Iorio Accorgan E Series and one or more of the Castiglione models
“Magicvox” by Crumar, akin to Iorio Accorgan E Series and one or more of the Castiglione models
The reedless and bellowless Hohner Electravox N. The Electravox has changed very little since the early 1970’s. ELEX of Castelfidardo built keyboards for Hohner at one time and likely built some or all of the Electravox models.
Cari Signori, questo e tutto, per adesso!
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, this is all, for now!

That is, this is THE END.....for now. To share any additional facts, questions, comments, suggestions or materials, please email the author at: TRIESTEMUSIC@aol.com. To see this and other articles and resources in both English and Italian language versions, please visit the Home and Trieste Music pages at our web site: WWW.CAFFETRIESTE.COM

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