

CGSUNY Newsletter

Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York www.cgsuny.org

Phone: 607-865-8775 Address: 8 Banta Place, Stamford NY 12167



President's Message

Many years ago when I was first struck by the need for a classical guitar society for the upstate region. It was a purely selfish idea. I wanted to live in an area where the classical guitar and its music were practiced and appreciated. Now I had always thought that if you wanted to get something done and done right, you had to do it yourself. Boy, was I wrong!

I also believed that classical guitar people were cool cats and very individualistic and independent types. I've had no reason to reassess that opinion. It was assumed by me, at least, that forming a guitar society would be like herding cats. But to borrow a quote from Jim Hightower of Texas, "Anyone who thinks you can't herd cats has never heard of a can opener." Enter Gail Hamilton. Gail was a guitar student of mine at the time and I blurted out my idea in her presence. Gail was the can opener. The idea was the food. Everyone knows the history from that point.

I can't possibly name all the members of CGSUNY who have been instrumental in its growth, but they range far and wide. Just recently I got an email from Ron Scott. Ron Scott lives in New Zealand! He has submitted a review of a guitarist who recently gave a recital in his neck of the woods. (You can read that review in this newsletter.) How many of you knew we had a correspondent from 'down under'?

As some of you have heard, after eight years at the helm I am stepping down from the presidency. I believe in term limits and I also know that CGSUNY is a self-directing entity. It has been a rare privilege to preside over an organization, which runs on good motives, energized people, cooperation, diverse creativity, and a selfless work ethic. At the fall festival we will elect a new president and I know that person will be as grateful as I have been to work for the common advancement and development of CGSUNY. If you are interested in serving on the Board of Directors, nominating someone, or serving as President of CGSUNY, please email Carolyn Rifembark at crifembark@aol.com

Best regards to all,
Dennis Turechek

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Ben Verdery to headline CGSUNY 2010 Fall Event

Plans are already well underway for the 2010 CGSUNY Fall Classical Guitar Festival to be held on Saturday, October 2 and Sunday, October 3, 2010 at Hartwick College in Oneonta. Our featured performer this year is Ben Verdery. He will appear in concert on Saturday evening. Distinguished as "one of the classical guitar world's foremost personalities" by Classical Guitar Magazine, "an American original, an American master," by Guitar Review Magazine, and "iconoclastic and inventive" by The New York Times, Ben Verdery enjoys an innovative and eclectic musical career. He has performed at International Guitar Festivals worldwide. A prolific composer, many of his compositions have been performed, recorded and published over the years. The most recent are, *Now and Ever* for David Russell (Telarc) and *Peace, Love and Guitars* for John Williams and John Etheridge (SONY Classical). Verdery's *Scenes from Ellis Island*, for guitar orchestra, has been widely broadcast and performed at festivals and universities in the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Europe, and the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet included it on their CD *Air and Ground* (Sony Classical). Visit his website www.benjaminverdery.com for more information (including some recordings and videos) about this incredible performer.

Mr. Verdery will also present a Master Class for advanced college Guitar students on Sunday. The weekend will conclude with an Honors Concert. Last year this event featured students from Mannes, SUNY Potsdam, SUNY Fredonia, Ithaca, Hartwick, and SUNY Oneonta. New to the Fall Festival will be exhibits from vendors.

Sonatas, and Concerti on the Classical Guitar - by Giancarlo Sidoli

One of the things that I have always found to be true of guitar music is that it defies the stereotypes commonly found in the classical and romantic periods. It started out as a parlor instrument, an instrument of gypsies and vagabonds, or an instrument to accompany singers when the cost of a piano was out of the musician's reach. Now it is recognized as a concert instrument and people are just as enthralled as going to see a solo pianist.

One of the reasons that it became the great concert instrument that it is today is that large works have been composed for it. Before the classical period much of the guitar repertoire such as that of Devisée, Corbetta, and Sanz was put in suites of short movements that while exhibiting charm in my opinion were much more for the personal enjoyment of the player than for a concert audience. Once the Classical period came guitarists such as Sor, Guiliani, and Carulli had grander ideas for the guitar. Rather than just simply write short pieces (although all three did write many), they took the concept of treating the solo guitar as an orchestra much like what Beethoven did for the piano. With this idea these composers were capable not only of write extended sonata allegro form on an instrument with not nearly as much development as the keyboard family, they were able to do so in an effective manner. Some pieces that exhibit these ideas are Sor's Grand Sonatas Op. 15, 22, and 25, Grand Solo op. 14, as well as Carulli's Sonatas and Serenades. Guiliani's many Themes and Variations also exhibit this idea. One thing that set Guiliani and Carulli apart was their mastery of writing not only for the solo guitar but also for introducing the concept that a guitar can play alongside a fortepiano and even a full orchestra. Carulli's Concerti in A Major and E Minor are of note as well as his Beethoven variations for piano and guitar.

Giancarlo is a recent graduate of SUNY Oneonta. He will be attending SUNY Fredonia in the fall.

Matthew Marshall Recital, New Plymouth, New Zealand May 30th 2010

Matthew Marshall learned to play guitar in Hamilton under Ross Townsend, the current President of the New Plymouth Classical Guitar Society. Since then Marshall has gone on to study under John Mills and Gordon Crosskey of the UK. He also spent some time with David Leisner in New York. While studying in New York, Matthew spent time rehabilitating his right hand. Marshall is currently head of Head of Guitar at Massey University here in New Zealand but has also held posts overseas and given numerous Master Classes in various countries and cities including Mannes College of Music in New York.

He has developed a loyal fan base, many of whom are non-guitar players. For an audience such as this, he picked a great program. Commencing with Dowland's *Fantasia No. 7*, we were treated to some wonderful Renaissance harmonies, which were superbly brought out. A replica 19th century custom-built model was used for the performance of three Lieder by Franz Schubert as arranged by Mertz; *Ständchen*, *Das Fischermädchen*, *Lob der Tränen*. The first half concluded with Dilermando Reis (*Se Ela Perguntar* and *Xodo da Baiana*) and the ever-popular Albéniz (*Tango* and *Asturias*). Personally, I found the Reis a little clean for my liking, as I prefer Brazillian music with a touch of roughness. I wasn't overly impressed with the Albéniz, as he didn't do anything new with these pieces. During *Asturias* he also seemed to come a little unstuck at times.

The second half commenced with *Nevicata* by the Italian composer Benvenuto Terzi. Ever the academic, Marshall informed us that Terzi was actually an accountant by trade and only considered the guitar to be a hobby. It was during the next set of pieces I noticed that the entire time Marshall had been playing from the score. He had a wide screen laptop set up in front of him, with a mouse by his right foot for turning the virtual pages with his shoe. The laptop was cleverly hidden in a custom built black box. I approached Marshall after the concert to ask how long he had been using this aid. He replied he couldn't be bothered memorizing these days and that the laptop afforded him an easy means of storing and displaying his music. It was only the fourth time he had used the laptop in concert and until this set of pieces he hadn't had any trouble. During *Capricho Arabe* he was unable to turn the page and had to temporarily stop and use his hand. He also performed *Prelude No. 5* and *Grand Vals* by Tarrega.

Next came the highlight for me with *L'hymne a l'amour* by Marguerite Monnot and Édith Piaf as arranged by Roland Dyen. Although I'm unfamiliar with this piece, I found the phrasing to be very good and even more so how he was able to bring out the melody whilst still retaining the underlying harmonic coloring. The programme finished with a fun piece involving tightrope walking, applause and the usual cornucopia that comes with a visit to the circus – all played on the guitar of course. I'm not sure if the music requested facial expressions, but they certainly aided in the humor of *Brunella, the Dancing Bear* by Stephen Funk Pearson (b. 1950). As an encore, we were treated to *Love Waltz* by Ulrik Neumann.

The above concert review was submitted by Ron Scott from New Zealand

The Guitar Builder's Art - by Michael Guarente

I am a builder. It is my belief that a better end product is the result of well thought design and meticulous execution, and that the intent and care put into a product remain with it indefinitely, provided it is cared for by its owner. The success of my products has always been contingent upon this simple philosophy. The design is bred from function and the aesthetics follow, whether it be a simple stepstool, a garden gate, a wine glass, a plate of food, a piece of music, or a guitar. Following this process has led to, has been, one of the most fulfilling aspects of my life.

I am a student. I have had the good fortune of knowing and working with many amazing people over the years and absorbing as much as I could of what they had to offer. Many of them are members of this guitar society. I'm indebted to them and to all others who will follow, and will never stop learning. I'm also indebted to the disparate points of view which contribute to my own philosophies. The trades are essentially indifferent. How often do we find ourselves learning more about something unexpected than what we intended to learn in the first place? I've learned diplomacy while setting out to learn to build better homes, fatherhood from setting out to build better guitars, friendship from setting out to simply work.

I am a teacher. Again, what you find yourself able to share with others may come as more of a surprise to you than to anyone else. Having accumulated a broad skill set, I've found myself plopped in various positions of authority and expertise. My instruments and everything else I build have little choice but to serve as examples of 21st century craftsmanship. I learn from others practicing today as much as those who have slipped into the past. I utilize what works and if something new works better, I do it.

The act of guitarmaking has changed little over the years and the changes in its construction have been subtle for the most part. Our traditional materials are starting to dwindle, our traditional forms remain greatly in tact, and modern materials find their way into our oeuvre of resources. But we take little steps, learn from those before us, do our best and keep going, and leave behind our small contributions to the world of the guitar.

I will share brief quotes from two of my mentors. I found myself overwhelmed at some point and asked Bruce Walker for some technical advice. "Just make it perty, make it work." I asked Tom Humphrey how much to worry about details. "It has to be perfect!" I find great freedom in these small statements, and in following these credos find perfection in each moment. It is the perfection of the act itself that carries to the end product.

Michael Guarente
Builder
mike.guarente@gmail.com

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