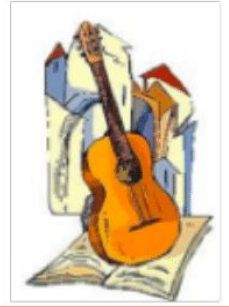


CGSUNY NEWSLETTER

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

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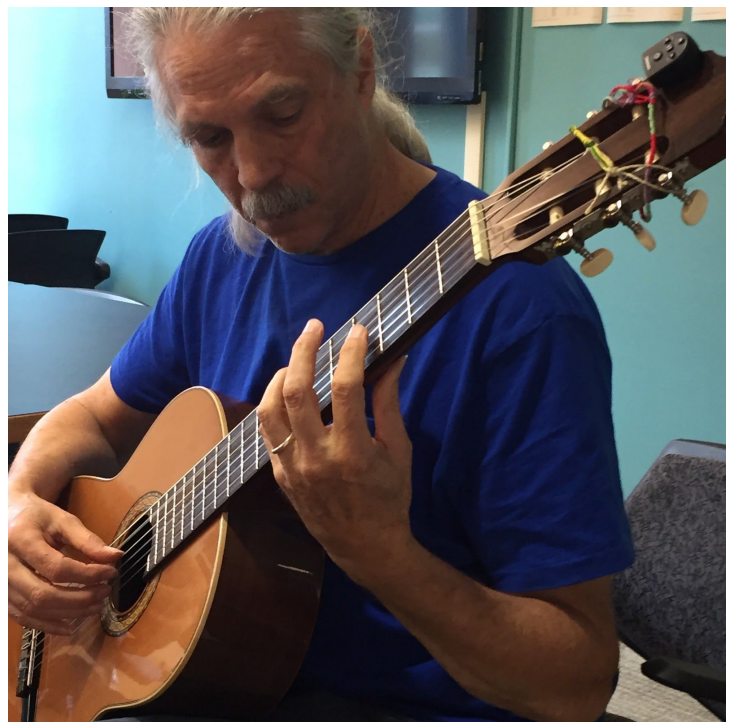
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President's Letter

Our Society's 19th annual Fall Festival is now history and I agree with all of you who thought it a grand success. Two superlative concerts from Laura Snowden and the Rubio Duo, a thin (because of the early date of the Fest) but still outstanding Collegiate Concert, along with some memorable members' performances. I want to thank everyone who pitched in, joined or renewed membership, or just came and listened. The Board is now in the process of planning next year's 20th anniversary extravaganza.



We welcome two new members to our Board: Allie Caffrey is a science major and student of VP Sal Salvaggio at SUNY Oneonta. Donna Noyes-Grosser is from the Capital District and will be essential to our plans for two significant events in the Albany area this spring. We are happy for the varied perspectives they offer and we recognize that Donna will be an important member bringing those plans to fruition. We welcome input from all members and look forward to the future as we expand our events and our membership.

I also want to extend deep, heartfelt gratitude to George Lesh, who is stepping down after 10 years as the Society's Secretary. He has been essential to our continued success and absolutely indispensable to me in my years as President. All best wishes and thanks to him (and thanks also to Giancarlo Sidoli who has generously volunteered to take on that crucial role)

Happy playing and listening to all as the season turns,

Paul Sweeny, President

Laura Snowden Review
Deena Freed

This is about knitting at first: In knitting with mohair yarn there is a beautiful, fuzzy glow that rises just above the knitted fabric. Knitters call that a "halo". There is a quality of magic and warmth that is associated with that halo. It's why we knit.

At her recent concert in Oneonta, I was delighted to find that when Laura Snowden plays her guitar, there is also a beautiful halo in her sound. The enchanting effect is due to her clean technique, her sensitive musical



phrasing, and the magical resonance of her guitar. If you listen to her on YouTube, the resonance does not come through as clearly. Listening to her in person is an experience to be savored and cherished. Her musical halo is why we listen - and why we strive to achieve similar results in our own playing.

Laura started the September 28th program of our Fall Festival with well-worn guitar classics: Sor, Introduction and Variations on a Theme of Mozart and the 5 Villa Lobos Preludes. Perhaps we didn't look forward to hearing those yet another time. But in Laura's hands, they were fresh and new. Sometimes the Mozart Variations can feel a bit like a mechanical exercise to me. But with Laura's touch, and her beautiful phrasing each variation offered a new surprise. And... the Villa Lobos Preludes really are gorgeous pieces when offered up with such a high level of musicality.

Laura's own piece called Anpao was the highlight of her concert for me. She evoked the mood of the dawn in very open harmonies and a really astounding level of resonance. Just when I was mesmerized by the beauty of it, she added other sounds with her voice. At first it comes in subtly – a mysterious sound coming from nowhere – then it becomes more obvious that she's actually humming. I found the effect to be exquisite.

The piece that stood out most in the second half of the concert was Sonatina, Op. 52 No. 1 by Lennox Berkeley. This piece was written for Julian Bream. It is a major work, with some difficult passages. Laura handled it all with ease and her usual musical sensitivity.

The encore was her gorgeous arrangement of the Irish folk tune, The Parting Glass. It was very beautiful with its string of harmonics in one of the repeats of the melody. Once again, her beautiful tone and phrasing came through and enchanted the audience. Laura's arrangement of The Parting Glass is available for purchase on her website.

Laura studied with Julian Bream and is still associated with him. He no longer is able to play the guitar, but he still has pieces written for him. He hands them over to Laura (and others) to premiere at Wigmore Hall in London. That's quite an honor for Laura. And, for Julian Bream, it's a wonderful way of handing down the torch to another generation. We're in good hands, with Laura Snowden holding that torch and with the halo of beautiful sound. The glow, and the memory of it, lasts for a good long while.

Laura Snowden Review

Giancarlo Sidoli

This year's featured performer was Laura Snowden from the UK.

In the first half we were graced with highly personal performances of Fernando Sor's Introduction, Theme and Variations op. 9, all five Preludes by Heitor Villa-Lobos, and Laura's own composition Anpao.

The second half was Agustin Barrios Vals OP. 8 no. 4, another of Laura's compositions L'etoile et al Rose, Lennox Berkeley's Sonatina, op. 52 and she closed with Giulio Regondi's Introduction et. Caprice op. 23.



What sets Laura's interpretations apart from many other artists who also play the same Sor, Villa-Lobos, Barrios, Berkeley and Regondi, is her careful setting of dynamics and rubato throughout. As someone who is constantly seeking to find smaller and smaller degrees of dynamics set in between mezzo piano and piano, mezzo forte and forte, I truly admired her focus on these dynamic ranges.

She never overplayed her guitar and her left hand was quite agile resulting in minimal "string talk".

I overheard the most chatter about her compositions at intermission and after the concert. Her compositional language is somewhat post impressionistic. She uses an extended technique that is often second nature to guitarists but which very few use in contemporary guitar composition---the human voice. Through manipulation of her humming/nasal resonance and blending with natural and artificial harmonics, set before us a highly ethereal sound in Anpao and L'Etoile et la Rose.

News From The Board:

Playing at the meeting

Board members have suggested that we play together at the start of each board meeting. All members and friends are invited to join in the fun and to stay afterwards for the meeting if you'd like.

We had our first trial run at the board meeting on November 17th. It was exciting and rewarding. All members and friends are invited to join in the fun and to stay afterwards for the meeting.

The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 12th at noon.

Please contact Janet Sutta at thisfineday@gmail.com for a link to the music and for other details concerning "playing at the meeting".

Matt Downey asked me to send this link to the next piece that we will be playing in "Playing at the Meeting"

Link to Ave Verum Quartet
Arranged by Matt Downey

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=11XgyKT1XXylN2kSDQLdn2c8QC0xbC0s5>

Ensemble clinic at Fall Fest 2020

Going to throw this idea out there for a new activity for our Fall Festival 2020.

In addition to the slate of activities we normally schedule we are considering a large ensemble presented as an educational activity with a conductor/clinician.

Interested members would be emailed assigned parts to learn in advance. During the day, in a dedicated (1 ½ hour(?) time slot, the ensemble will rehearse with a conductor who would work on interpretation, technique etc. Members who are not rehearsing would have the opportunity to observe.

We are looking for member feedback.

Please respond to Sal Salvaggio, CGSUNY V.P. at: vaggio@yahoo.com

Editor's Note

Hi CGSUNY members, past members and friends,

CGSUNY is headed into a big anniversary. 2020 will mark our 20th year. We're working hard to polish up and expand our act. On the boards are several events. Two in the planning stage now are in the Albany area. First date, February 21st, at Union College, free and open to everyone, please join us, place, time and other details to follow. Second date, later in the spring, an ensemble concert, is in the planning stage. If you'd like to be a part of the team please contact Donna, Donna_Noyes_Grosser@alumni.umass.edu

Please note opportunities to join us to play at meetings. To request advance copies of the music that we're working on, please contact Janet, thisfineday@gmail.com

We have built a track record of performances at at least three fundraising venues, some of which have morphed into grant opportunities. And we're making strides to include more playing opportunities and more educational outreach in our programming. Our hope is to prepare ensemble music through rehearsals at "play at the meeting" sessions so that we can perform as pick up ensembles at upcoming fundraiser events.

We would like to publish your words in the newsletter. As you can see the formatt of the newsletter allows for unlimited material and members have indicated that we look forward to hearing "guitar adventure stories". If you've heard a recording and loved it, please write a review and recommendation, if you've taken pictures of guitar related activities, please send them in, to: Janet thisfineday@gmail.com

Please take a look at the website, (we're updating it) for announcements of concerts and other doings.

Please make plans to join us at the 2020 Fall Festival.

Please Join us! If your membership has lapsed, please join again, you'll have fun and we need you.

Janet Sutta Board member, newsletter

AMATEUR CORNER MEMORIZING

Janet Sutta

I have the privilege of seeing my grandson develop as a musician. He seems to ingest the music without effort. He doesn't agonize over memorizing a piece, as I did until I gave it my all.

I took the plunge with a Sor study.

The study is only 33 measures long and the first 8 measures repeat at the end, so the learning is even less. It took me several weeks of agonizing work to get that piece memorized to the point where I could play all the notes, but I was still not making music with it. My next step was to add the coloring directions indicated in the score. That continued work made the "memorized notes flow, relaxed me and the piece started to sound much more like music.

Now, I'm still working to improve the piece, going back to it and trying out different ways of coloring it. It's well memorized and now it's a pleasure to play and to play around with my first memorized piece. I've noticed multiple benefits flowing from my big effort.

A 2nd piece that I've memorized was magically easier. It was also a Sor study, of similar length, and equally difficult music, but my head and hands let it in with much less resistance. I'd done it once and survived.

Now I'm working on a Scarlatti duet, Sonata, Longo 288, the music is almost memorizing itself as I am learning it. The repeating patterns in the music jump out. As those patterns reveal themselves, memorization set in. I can see the start of a passage and "know" the rest of the passage/pattern without following the score. Another piece I'm also working on is an arrangement of Someone To Watch Over Me. It's much harder than the Scarlatti, but all the benefits of memorization are kicking in. Playing the introduction, an ascending and descending series of chords, each with an immediate resolution snapped into a recognizable pattern as soon as I played it. It was a musical pattern and a physical pattern that my fingers memorized.

Even more exciting for me is that as I play the song, with it's seemingly impossible chords, I can hear the melody and the melody is leading my fingers to the next chord. The piece is memorized and I didn't even try.