

CGSUNY Newsletter

The Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York

www.cgsuny.org

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A Note from CGSUNY President Paul Sweeny

The Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York was founded in the year 2000. It has seen many changes, but remains true to its original goal of promoting the classical guitar and its music. In a collaboration between Dennis Turechek and his student Gail Hamilton, was born this labor of love—especially since Gail was willing and able to do most of the hard work. The CGSUNY grew and became stronger because of countless members and volunteers in the Upstate region helping with fund raising concerts, outreach to schools, play-arounds at various venues, soirees, guitar ensemble performances, and, of course, the celebrated Fall Festival. Every year these altruistic members pitched in and built a bottom up organization that has become what we are today. As current president, I am leading us through unprecedented pandemic times and the future can seem uncertain, however, our efforts to grow and prosper are not. I invite all to join us in helping to make our future more certain. I am proud to follow in the footsteps of all who came before and the officers and members of the board of directors devote our energies to furthering these goals and serving those who share them.



Our Mission

Our purpose is to promote the education, appreciation and cultural awareness of the classical guitar and other associated instruments as a non-profit presenting arts organization.

Greetings From An Old Friend...

—Harry Pellegrin

Once again, we have played musical chairs and swapped hats. You will recall that a while back I was editing the newsletter, but took a hiatus. Janet Sutta took over (Thanks, Janet!) and accomplished this task for the better part of two years.

Well, I am back at it. As always, I welcome articles written by the membership. We are a vibrant and vital community of guitar aficionados after all.

If or when the theme and variations of COVID let us, it will be wonderful to see folks again 'for real'. Of course, membership will be the first to know when our venue restrictions ease. Until we meet again, you have my best regards.

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A Members Guide to the CGSUNY Website

—Matt Downey, CGSUNY Treasurer

If you are anything like me, the pandemic has really put your brain and body to the test. We have spent the last two years experiencing our lives through a computer screen. I know I have learned a lot of great things during the pandemic for teaching and socializing. The Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York has successfully used Zoom for two Fall Festivals, meetings, roundtable discussions, and soirees. During this time when computers are needed to safely interact with society, CGSUNY has made changes to our website. This article should help you navigate our website and help us add new content like events and photos. [If you have photos you would like to share for the website, please send them to me at this email: down2425@gmail.com]

The *Main Page* on the website is for any upcoming, recent, and new information pertaining to CGSUNY. You can find membership and donations buttons on the *Main Page* along with quick access to our bylaws. The TABS on the *Main Page* will help you find other useful information related to the Society. The *Festival/Events* TAB will host information for CGSUNY sponsored events like our Fall Festival and Soiree. The *Membership* TAB has PayPal buttons to pay membership and/or makes donations. It also includes our current board members, and details assigned duties like the Newsletter Editor and Webmaster. The *Resources* TAB is a drop-down menu for other services provided by CGSUNY. This includes our Newsletter, a user-friendly Events Submission Calendar, photos, media, and other associated links. The *Lesh Memorial Scholarship Fund* TAB currently contains information about the man who inspired the scholarship, George Lesh. More information including the application, the audition process, and awardees will be provided in the near future. The last TAB is for *Contact Us* information. It has email/snail-mail information and provides membership payment buttons again.

I wanted to end this article by explaining the user-friendly *Events Submission Calendar* located in our *Resources* TAB. Anyone can submit events for the calendar regardless of membership. Using the

form on this page (<https://cgsuny.org/resources/calendar>), you may submit the information for the concert/event. You must provide all relevant information for the concert in order for the submission to be clear and accurate. We do ask that these events promote the appreciation, education, and cultural awareness of the Guitar. If you would like something posted but do not want to use the website; email your event information to myself, the President, the Vice-President, the Secretary, or our Webmaster.

—Matt Downey





HOW I CAME TO OWN A 1967 RAMIREZ GUITAR

—Dennis Turechek

Along time ago, back in the olden days, in 1969 I think it was, I was looking to upgrade my classical guitar. I owned a \$300 Velasquez which had served me well but I was intent upon improving the quality of instrument I played.

I was studying with Albert Blain at the time and as luck would have it, he had just acquired a 1967 Ramirez with redwood top and was displaying it in his studio apartment for all his students to see. He was looking to sell it for \$1,200 to finance a trip to Madrid to buy 4 more to bring back for his students. Even though this was 1969, the date on the label in the guitar was 1967. Back in the day, \$1200 was worth about \$1200 and so I wanted to make sure I was getting something special. [See editor's note.] When I asked Albert about the date disparity, he told me this tale:

It seems he went to a concert at Carnegie Recital Hall and heard a man and wife South American guitar duo and was blown away with the sound of the guitar that the wife played. After the concert he went back stage and congratulated them on a fine recital and told the wife that he was particularly impressed with the sound of her guitar. She told him that it wasn't her guitar, but that her guitar had been stolen the night before in Washington D.C. after their next to last concert of their tour. She told Albert that Sophocles Papas had loaned her this guitar to finish their tour in NYC. Albert went immediately to a pay phone (younger readers may want to Google this) and told Sophocles that he wanted to buy this guitar and how much was it. He wired him (again, you may need to Google it) \$1200 that very night and that is how Albert acquired the guitar.

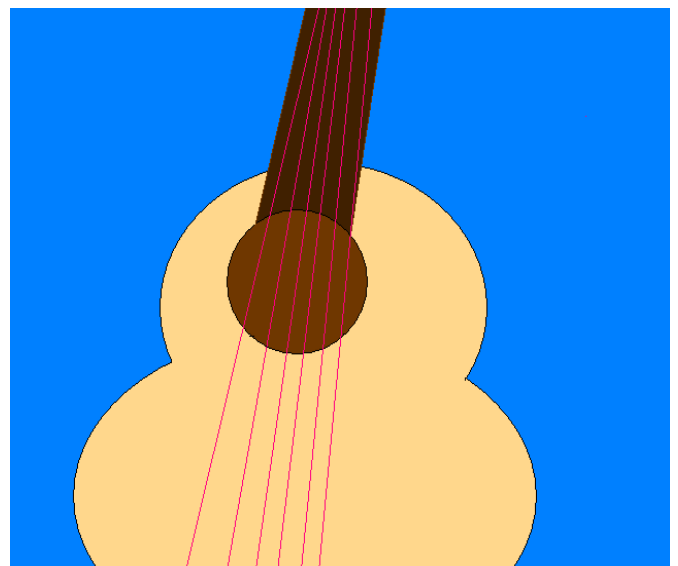
I figured that this must indeed be a special guitar after hearing this story and bought it immediately

thereafter. As a footnote to this story, I should tell you that Albert did indeed go to Madrid and brought back four Ramirez guitars two of which had necks that warped and two which cracked on the top. Albert asked me for years after if I would like to sell the guitar back to him.

I still play this Ramirez and it never cracked and never warped. Since this instrument hung on Sophocles Papas' wall for two years, it had time to cure slowly and got acclimatized without the sudden change in humidity and temperature differences in NY and Madrid.

Dennis Turechek---November 22, 2021

Editor's Note: \$1,200 in 1969 is equivalent in purchasing power to about \$9,043.78 today, an increase of \$7,843.78 over 52 years. The dollar had an average inflation rate of 3.96% per year between 1969 and today.



Tone Production (Part One)

—Harry G. Pellegrin



At least two factors are involved in tone production. These main factors are:

Attack: This is what most people consider the determining factor in tone production—and while it is a major, it is not the only one. Do not be tempted into believing that angle of attack or pluck/stroke placement along the string are the sole factors.

Volume: Tone is invariably effected by how much volume (energy input) the performer is imparting with the pluck/stroke –or slur!

Volume: Although it is listed in second position on my list, let's start with **volume**. After all, volume is how the guitarist—and any musician—begins to formulate interpretation. This is accomplished through dynamics. How does volume relate and interact with tone? The amount of energy imparted to the string in its most basic aspect is whether or not there will be undue and unwanted fret noise or other unpleasant tones produced. There ARE some modern pieces that require the string or strings to be overplayed for just this reason—a harsh tone is required for the emotional content of the composition. If you have played for any amount of time, you have heard first-hand just what an 'overplucked' string sounds like. The tone is harsh and raspy; there is probably quite a good deal of sound generated from the string impacting with the fret wire(s) somewhere along the fingerboard.

Tone production at higher volumes is directly impacted by left hand strength and the proper use thereof. If one wishes to see this clearly demonstrated, fret a note close to the lower fret wire and apply light pressure. Then pluck that string gently. There will be buzzing. Now depress the string just behind the higher fret wire and apply moderate pressure. When the string is plucked with force, (and depending on the quality of the instrument!), the sound produced should be loud, full, and devoid of unwanted noise. As an aside, please remember that the left thumb is *not* the clamp that holds the string down; one should use the arm and its weight as well to apply pressure to the string(s).



To conclude this short discussion on the topic of volume and tone production, while not the major deciding factor in good or bad (or desired effect) in regard to tone, accuracy in finger placement and correct application of pressure to the string/fret is a dynamic aspect in the process. Next time, some thoughts on nails, flesh, the juxtaposition of these two factors and relative plucking distance from the saddle or fretboard end.

To be continued....

Vals Brevis 16

Harry George Pellegrin

Dedicated to the memory of George Lesh

Guitar

① rit. ② ③ a tempo ④ 1/2 CV

7 1/2 CII CV

13 CIII

19 CV

26

32

38

44 ③ CV

Vals Brevis 16

The musical score for "Vals Brevis 16" consists of six systems of music, numbered 50 through 79. The notation includes a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Chordal textures are prominent, with some measures featuring triplets of eighth notes. Performance markings include "CIII" (Crescendo III), "CV" (Crescendo V), "GX" (Guitar), and "rit." (ritardando). The piece concludes with a double bar line at measure 79.

A Tribute Waltz for George Lesh (July 23, 1947 ~ February 20, 2020)

I met George in 2012 at my first CGSUNY Fall Festival. What struck me immediately was his personal warmth and sincere desire to make all he met feel welcome and included. It was impossible to know George for more than an hour or two for him to have you feeling like you were in the presence of a long-standing friend. That was his gift and his magic. He was a sincere lover of music and particularly the guitar. As a music educator, he had instilled a love of music into quite a few young musicians. We worked together on the CGSUNY board for many years and for me a high point of the festival was just getting to hang out with George at the CGSUNY table at SUCO.

His passing left many of us with a void that has yet to be filled. This waltz of mine is my way of poorly capturing the nurturing vitality and grace he displayed until the very end. George, my friend, you are sorely missed.

The following article is reproduced from the CGSUNY website.:

George Lesh began his musical career at the age of 5 years when he started studying the piano at Ray Cramer Studio in Abington, Pa. He continued his studies through elementary and high school, adding the oboe to his repertoire in band in high school. At West Chester University, he majored in music education, studying piano

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under Benjamin Whitten. Throughout his career, he took advantage of other graduate music education opportunities at Ithaca College and Westminster Choir College.

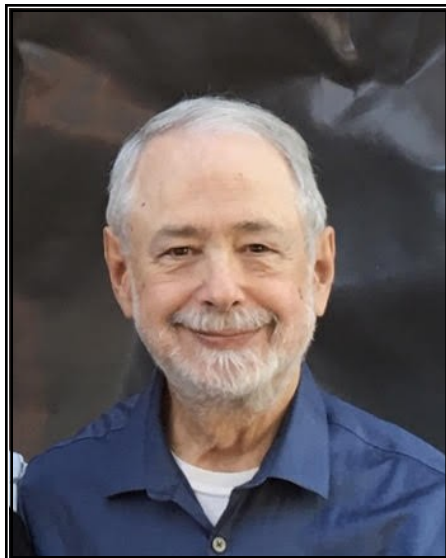
He started his career teaching band and chorus in Slatington, Pa. He moved on to teach vocal music in the Sayre Area School District and finally spent the remainder of his vocal music teaching career at Unatego Central Schools for the next 34 years, retiring in 2008. While employed at Unatego he was elected zone representative for NYSSMA to advocate for music education.

While teaching music at Sayre, he became director of the barbershop chorus and after moving to Unadilla, he also directed the Midstatesmen barbershop chorus in Oneonta for a few years.

When he moved to Unadilla, the Sayre chorus gave him the gift of an acoustic guitar, that he taught himself to play. He used the guitar to accompany singers when there was no other musical instrument available in school, social and church venues.

Once he retired, he gifted himself a classical guitar and took lessons from Dennis Turechek. Eventually he became the secretary of the board of the Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York. He was instrumental in helping to advocate for the classical guitar and plan the yearly festivals held each fall.

He was also a church organist at Sacred Heart Church in Sidney, NY for 17 years and at the time of his passing, he was the church musician at the Unadilla United Methodist Church for the past 20 years. He has played for just about all the churches



*We're on the
web!*

cgsuny.org

in the surrounding communities whenever requested.

George and his wife, Louise met at college through their mutual interests in

music. They enjoyed singing together whenever they could. He assisted her in her direction of children's choirs at church. Together they encouraged the musical pursuits of their children.

George was his daughter, Heather's first piano teacher. She was one of his accompanists in choir in high school. She graduated with a bachelor's and master's degree in piano performance and pedagogy from Westminster Choir College in Princeton, NJ. She taught for 15 years in Concord Community Music School in NH before teaching in the music department at Hartwick College, Oneonta, NY.

His sons have also been involved in music as well. Ben was in chorus and band in high school. Ben, an English teacher, is the theater director and collaborates with his colleagues in producing high school musicals. He sang in a band after graduation from college and continues to enjoy singing whenever he can. Brian was in band in high school, playing drums. After attending college, he taught himself to play the acoustic guitar with the help of his dad. He now plays in a cover band for enjoyment many weekends. Jon was also in choir and was involved in the musical productions in high school. He still continues to enjoy music whenever he can.

—From the *CGSUNY.ORG* website



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