

CGSUNY NEWSLETTER

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

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CGSUNY 1st Virtual Soiree

A ReportSal Salvaggio

Autobiography

"1978"Ric Chrislip

The Amature Corner

Virtual soirees

Good advice from Giancarlo

Bringing up baby with music.....Janet Sutta

[A listener's report on the first CGSUNY virtual Soiree - Sal Salvaggio](#)

The first virtual soiree of by members of the Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York was held on Sunday, December 5 ,2020 at 4 pm.

Paul Sweeney, our president, hosted the event and Dr. Eric Sheffield of SUNY Binghamton was our engineer. 15 members were present and 5 played. The performer's and the works performed were:

Marc Hecker - "Rujero" by Gaspar Sanz

Bill Simcoe - "Milonga" by Astor Piazzola arranged by Mr Simcoe

Matt Downey -His arrangement of the main title theme from "My Neighbor Totoro" and "Stroll" both by Joe Hisaishi as well as Irving Berlin's "White Christmas".

Giancarlo Sidoli - Two Gallant era pieces by Giuseppe Antonio Brescianello, and his own arrangement of the carol "Adeste Fidelis".

Paul Sweeny- a "Milonga" by South American composer Maximo Diego Pujol.

It was an uplifting way to spend the afternoon especially in these troubled times.

More players were encouraged to participate next time! The virtual medium has allowed for players and listeners from different regions of Upstate New York to participate. " - December 8, 2020

Sal Salvaggio

Adjunct lecturer/Professor of Classical Guitar/ SUNY Oneonta

BOARD of the Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York

My Life and Adventures in Music “1978”, Ric Chrislip

In January of 1978, I performed a voice-and-guitar recital at Potomac State College in Keyser, West Virginia. This gave me a chance to do genealogical research in the area regarding my (adoptive) Chrislip/Crislip forebears. I arrived during a rare snowstorm, in a town which had no useful snow removal equipment. At one point my old Volkswagen could not continue because the bottom of the car was rubbing against the deep snow. I observed an improvised snowplow: a pickup truck dragging a large plank.

In February I went to Virginia. I did a radio interview for WRFK in Richmond--this may have been the time that I met and visited Grete Dollitz--and a recital at Rappahannock Community College in Glens, Virginia. I also performed for the Gloucester Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and started a long-lasting friendship with the branch president.

In March I began a small midwestern tour with a recital at William Woods College in Fulton, Missouri, and then a performance at Calumet College in Whiting, Indiana. A few days later I performed a recital for the Milwaukee Classical Guitar Society, followed by a class in repertoire for voice and guitar, both at the Wisconsin Conservatory. I performed at Silver Lake College in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, and then for a History of Guitar class at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee for music historian Dr. Thomas F. Heck. He is known for his research and thesis on the music of Mauro Giuliani as well as research on songs of Franz Schubert which were published with guitar accompaniment during Schubert's lifetime. Working with Dr. Heck was a valuable connection—he had even loaned me a Renaissance lute, and I had started including it in some of my performances.

The next day I performed a lecture-recital at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point, where my former Northwestern University roommate and violinist, Jack Abell, was teaching. I had performed with Jack at UW Stevens Point three years earlier when I was about to move from Chicago to New York City. When I did a duo fringe recital with Sal Salvaggio at the Boston Early Music Festival more than twenty years later, a member of the audience remembered me from a performance at UW Stevens Point.

As I mentioned in my last installment, I had butted into a conversation with conductor Leonard Slatkin, and he had accepted my suggestion that he bring the “folk group” from the Chicago Symphony’s performance of David Del Tredici’s *Final Alice* to Saint Louis and Minneapolis. So in April I went to play tenor banjo for *Final Alice* with the Minnesota Orchestra. While I was there, our second son, Nathan, was born in Oneonta.

For performers, summers are a different situation from the rest of the year—either you do something at a summer festival, or you have no gigs. I found information about a Shakespeare festival called the Globe of the Great Southwest in Odessa, Texas. I wrote to the festival and was hired as their resident musician for the summer at a salary of \$100 a week, with my stipulation that I would not be required to participate on Sundays. (As a Sabbath observance, I had previously committed not to work or perform on Sundays except to do sacred music.)

I reported to the festival in June, and we opened with Shakespeare’s *Othello*. I performed several functions: onstage middle Eastern mandolin for a dance party, backstage lute music on guitar between scenes, and other incidental music. I performed John Dowland’s “Come, Heavy Sleep” (“the image of true death”) as an intro to the final scene in Desdemona’s bedroom where she correctly fears that her husband, Othello, plans to murder her. I also had the duty of climbing into the rafters above the stage at one point in the play to ring an alarm bell. This is when my Sabbath absence became glaringly apparent: for the Sunday performance, no one was assigned to substitute for me, and the bell was unring. I believe that the director regretted agreeing that I would not have to work on Sundays.

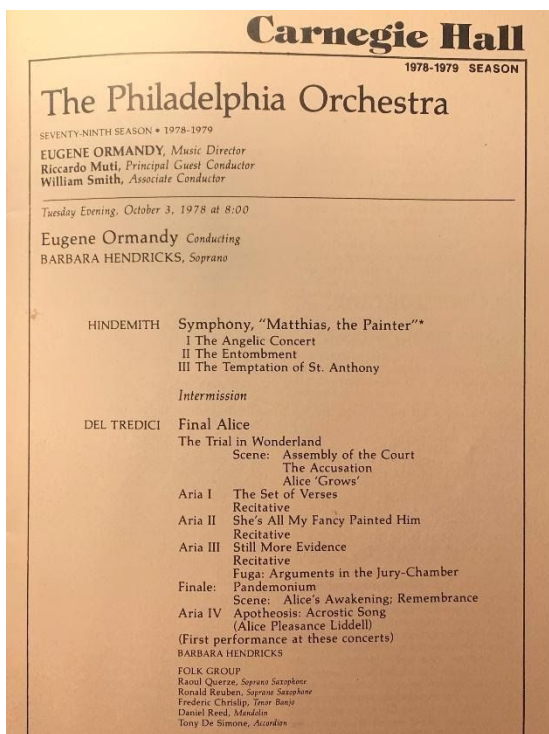
Next we performed Shakespeare’s comedy *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. The director had me remain onstage with my guitar throughout the performance, playing occasionally. I composed and performed a simple setting of the song “The Cuckoo and the Owl”, which concludes the play. The most fruitful outcome of my work on this play came about because the director wanted the three main male characters to sing their respective love poems, while I accompanied on guitar. I composed in the style of Elizabethan lute songs, instinctively using lute tuning. There is one poem by the king, a sonnet by Lord Longaville, and another poem by Lord Dumaine. I am quite proud of them, especially the first two. Lord Longaville’s sonnet strongly suggested to me Dowland’s galliard songs (numbers 3, 4, 5, and 6 in his first book

of songs), which I carefully imitated. (However, the actor's very limited vocal range hampered my composition of the vocal part.) I now perform these three songs frequently. I asked for a critic to review me in the play, but I was panned.

The final play of the summer season was a new work about David and Saul called *The House of Saul*. My job for this play was basically incidental music, although I also had a tiny acting role. I studied the output of Abraham Zevi Idelsohn's research on ancient Jewish music and created a tune for the women to chant "Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands". I constructed a non-functioning *kinnor* (Hebrew lyre) for David to play and used two guitars backstage to pluck open strings to suggest the sound of a lyre.

In September, my first performance was a recital at Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois. I then stopped in Columbus, Ohio, where Dr. Thomas Heck was now in charge of the music library at Ohio State University. He and I performed a Schubert musicale at his home. The most memorable thing to me about that visit was the nine-foot 1936 Steinway piano which his wife had inherited from her grandmother. I have never played such an exciting instrument.

At the end of the month I played tenor banjo for *Final Alice* again, this time with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy. Less gratifying memories: I said something which offended Maestro Ormandy, I broke the glass of a revolving door at the hotel with my banjo case, and after a performance I happened upon a drunk falling on his face in a downtown alley. (I offered him my help but was turned down.) After three performances in Philadelphia, we took the piece to Carnegie Hall.



Now in October, I went south to perform a recital and workshop at the University of South Carolina-Salkehatchie, followed by a lecture-demonstration and recital at College of the Albemarle in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. The following week I returned to Columbus to perform a lecture-concert with Dr. Heck at Ohio State University. We repeated the lecture-concert in Minneapolis a few days later for the convention of the American Musicological Society. Dr. Heck kindly acknowledged me in his book *Franz Schubert: Sixteen Songs with Guitar Accompaniment* (Tecla Editions, 1980).

I had been a certified teacher in Illinois 1968-70, teaching junior high music, but it had become unbearable, and so I set off in 1970 to try to survive as a free-lance musician. In the summer of 1978, when I headed down to Texas, we did not know what or where our future would be. But we decided to return to the Oneonta area in the fall, and we stayed for a time at the home of Bob and Alane Starko in Wells Bridge. Alane taught first grade at Laurens Central School, and she told me that the music teacher was taking maternity leave (if I remember correctly). Having no engagements for November and December, I worked as the substitute music teacher for grades K-8. I actually found it to be fairly enjoyable, but teaching all day is too hard on my voice.

[The Amature Corner](#)

[About virtual soirees](#)

[Advice from Giancarlo to me about smooth performing](#)

[Bringing Up Baby With Music](#)

[Attending various virtual soirees](#) has given me access to both hearing and seeing players in or near to my community. I often use the chat function to ask “who is the composer and what is the name of a piece”.

It would be really helpful if each performer could put that information into the chat before or after s/he plays.

[Advice from Giancarlo](#)

I've been listening to Giancarlo Sidoli (CGSUNY board member and secretary) since we were both taking lessons with Dennis Turechek. I was amazed at Giancarlo's ability to memorize long, complicated pieces and at his knowledge about the composer, the period and the style. His playing was OK then, but not something you'd write home about. He attended Fredonia and played at several of our CGSUNY Fall Fests and although his playing improved it didn't then reach dizzying heights. Giancarlo's playing “wowed” me a year and a half ago. I was at Rich Mollins place in Davenport, at one of his musical evenings. They centered on jazz, but players of all persuasions were welcomed and cheered. Giancarlo accompanied his mom, Lissa Sidoli, actress/singer. He backed her voice carefully and played little inventive solo's in the vocal intermissions. Then Giancarlo played several pieces of his own composition. I heard beautiful melodies, interesting rhythms and gorgeous intonations. Giancarlo sounded to me like a professional musician.

So, what was the secret to his leap from adequate to wonderful? That was the question I asked him and he answered.

“I taught for two and a half years at Margaretville Central School and at Marathon Central School where I played instructional demonstrations in almost every class. I

was performing constantly. I also arranged piano accompaniments and folk tunes for choral performances which I conducted from the guitar.”

What a great piece of experiential advice. I was spurred on by Giancarlo’s words and now, I have started looking for opportunities to perform for a “live” audience. I asked some members of my pod to listen to a short piece and was so well rewarded by their reaction that I asked my son, who had come over to change a lightbulb (masked) to listen to a short piece. He also gave me a round of applause. I hope having an occasional audience will benefit my playing ‘cause it sure is fun.

BRINGING UP BABY, WITH MUSIC

Several friends have small children. And lately I’ve heard of a number of expected’s on the horizon.

My grandchildren play instruments. I’ve seen their interest, their progress and the benefits they’re already gleaning from making music.

One of my grandchildren lives only 10 miles from me so I was able to see and enjoy his musical journey from an early age. His parents were deliberate about exposing him to a wide variety of music from pre birth till now.

They had an electric piano in the house that was really key. As soon as Rene was old enough to sit in his dad’s lap without slipping off, the two of them would sit at the keyboard and play. At first Nathaniel would play and Rene would bang his little fists on the notes. Soon they were picking out the tunes of nursery rhymes and folk songs.

And sometimes, just howling away and finding notes that matched their voices. They made up songs to match their environment “I see mommy on the porch...OO” and they played sounds to match the stories they were telling and listening to. They played and played and played. Once school started, Rene started to learn recorder and then he graduated to flute. He also started 15 minute informal piano lessons. Long enough to learn to read music and play some simplified versions of classical pieces, keeping playing, play.

When Rene was 7, I invited the family to Family Camp at “Ashokan Music and Dance Camps”, you can google that to see the website. We arrived on a Sunday afternoon and there were lots of welcoming activities and an introduction to the place followed by a delicious dinner, some singing and then to bed. When we grownups woke up, Rene was gone. We knew that this was a safe place, no cars or other dangers, still we wondered and worried a bit about him. Walking from the bunk house to the dining

room, we heard music coming from the music hall. We peeked in and saw Rene on drums, and two other kids on piano and guitar. Later, they joined us for breakfast but for a little while, the band played on.

Inviting my children and the grandkids to Ashokan, family camp was a wonderful way to have a vacation, a visit and a musical adventure all at the same time.

I'm writing about Rene's introduction to music because I want to encourage parents and grandparents to open a musical door to our children and grandchildren at an early age. And to do it through play. Music lessons can and will come later, but when music or an instrument is introduced with lessons it often becomes a chore and a source of contention between child and parents who want to see some result from all the money that lessons cost. An electric keyboard, with earphones, could be a fabulous holiday gift.

About two years ago Rene picked up a guitar and started playing. I mean, right away. He started and continues to play by ear, hearing riffs and improvising easily. He's taking lessons now, at his request, wanting to learn more, faster, but he still doodles and dreams and plays guitar.