

Fret Wire

Fall 2023

The CGSUNY Newsletter



Information

Articles

Guitar Stuff!

Fret Wire

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Our membership is encouraged to submit articles and compositions for possible inclusion to the *Fret Wire* editorial staff for consideration. Please contact Harry at recitalguitarist@verizon.net

On our cover:
Summer Musings

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.

FALL 2023

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of Upstate New York***

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A Note from the CGSUNY President

—Paul Sweeny

As the summer winds to its inevitable, and lamented, end, I look back fondly to times with friends and times with the guitar. The Society maintained our monthly Soiree schedule, and we sponsored several fundraisers and workshops. One massive highlight for me personally was attending the Guitar Foundation of America's (50th anniversary!) Convention in Manhattan. The classical guitar world has progressed so far and in so many ways. Hearing the young players, including all those in the last two rounds of the Competition, I was constantly reminded of Bobby Jones' assessment of a

young Jack Nicklaus' golf game: "He played a game with which I am not familiar". The speed, the accuracy, the musicality, and the range of repertoire were truly astonishing. One of the many concerts featured three past Competition winners, one of whom was Margarita Escarpa (1994). Although she played a beautiful set, I strongly doubt that her performance would have qualified her to advance even to the semi-final round this year. This is no knock on her, but just an acknowledgement of the current state of the guitar world. The Convention include

Master Classes and daily hands-on technique workshops, which provided immensely helpful instruction. I left with a mixture of inspired exhilaration and the somber knowledge that so many play a game with which I am not, and never will be, familiar. Nonetheless, I carry on, still in love with our instrument. I hope we can all find that inspiration. (And we can all see and hear João Luiz, one of those fantastic fairly young players at our Fall Festival Oneonta in October. I hope you can all be there for what will be a real treat.)



Like us on Facebook!

Fret Buzz from the Editor's Desk

—Harry G. Pellegrin

Trying to get the Fall 2023 issue of the newsletter out by Labor Day. With all the Fest news and scheduling that will be available, my thought is that everyone will want to know what is going on as soon as possible.

You all know by now that we have secured special room rates at two area hotels—and at a significant discount from what the general population will be paying. I know you have received an email and have probably booked by now, but just in case, here is the info:

Fall Fest attendees who wish to book at CGSUNY rates should call the hotel of their choice with the group name or codes.

Holiday Inn Express - the hotel front desk can be

reached at 607-684-2000. The group code is FMF.

Courtyard by Marriott - hotel's front desk can be reached at 607-432-2200. The group code is FMFS.

Book early, book often — just a joke. Book ASAP if you haven't already done so.

Fall is the season for seeing the year conclude. After the last harvest, the temperatures drop, the leaves turn colors—nature's way of offering condolences for the end of the 'life' seasons. It also has other closures. Some of my long-time and long-term students are off to college this fall. It's the end of an era for them — and for me as well! Some of these kids I have had since they were tadpoles. I have watched them develop from children to fine young

adults. I am certain all of you who teach can relate to my feelings as you too have experienced them. I too am in the Fall of my years as well. I wonder if I will see any more young kids through from diapers (metaphorically) to driver's licenses. Actually, time is on no one's side.

Enough of my downer. It is the thought of our Fall Fest that cheers me. We get to see old friends and there is always some new piece that someone is working on that tickles our ears and makes it a *must-learn* over the winter. And even if winter for a Southern boy like me is just a cold gray bucket of sick, new music makes it bearable—fresh sheet music, a nice fire, a hot cup of tea... Even a little snow is cheery with the aforementioned bits



and pieces! And time with the guitar!!!

Please let me know what keeps you musically fulfilled and happy through the bitter dead months of winter—maybe a cabin fever article can be assembled from our collective musings.

Well that's it for me!

Enquiring Minds Want to Know...

Ongoing Questions as Posed by Deena Freed

How does one pick a piece that is appropriate to ones' playing level and why is that important?

Ah, this is an interesting question. The answer may be a bit hard to quantify. There are reasons to pick pieces at ones' level as well as picking repertoire that pushes the personal envelope. Allow me to explain. First how does one chose a piece at ones' level? The simplest and most direct way is to read through a number of pieces that one has previously heard in recording or heard performed. Here is a caveat. When I was a student I heard John Williams play the Stanley Myers Cavatina. To my youthful ear, it sounded relatively simple. Then I read through the score and realized it was quite over my sixteen year-old head. So hearing is not necessarily believing, so to speak. It wasn't until much later that I learned that particular piece.

Of course, when I was sixteen we had no internet and hence no Icelandic School of Guitar or any of the other myriad resources available in the twenty-first century. I had to schlep from Mannes to my friend Chris Hnottavange's apartment, or over to the Spanish Music Center—or even to the Lincoln Center Library—to examine any score and thereby determine if I could possibly perform it well in a decent allotment of time. Thankfully we are passed the *stone knives and bearskin* age of the early 1970's!* Online is quick, easy, and often free.

Sometimes picking a piece that is slightly above ones' level (or even much above, in the case I will report here) can be just the goad one needs to advance. When I was eighteen, I fell in love with the Bach D minor Chaconne. When I approached my teacher to ask if we could work on it, he said 'NO!' Emphatically. He added "One must be forty years old to have the emotional experience to bring any kind of meaningful interpretation to that master work!" That was probably his way of kindly distracting me from a challenge above my technical ability. Well, as I rode the subway from 14th Street back uptown towards the Bronx, I got off at 48th Street and the Spanish Music Center to purchase the Segovia transcription/adaptation of the Chaconne. If we couldn't work on it during my lessons, I

could always muck about with it in my spare time.

Some four months later, I walked into my lesson and was told to warm myself up with whatever I wanted to play. Twelve minutes later, I had played through the Chaconne. What my teacher hadn't counted on was, firstly, my great desire to play this wonderful music. Secondly, he didn't know that even at my very young age I had lost a number of friends to the reaper—including a very lovely young lady for whom I had a sincere emotional bond. I played from a broken heart and this must have been apparent. There was a moment of silence as the sound died away. Then, and without looking up, my teacher said "*Bueno*, that will be the Bach piece for your program." I felt an immense satisfaction from this victory and to this day, when I pick up any particularly nasty looking score for a piece that I desperately want to play, I encourage myself with my Chaconne experience.

As far as advancing ones' technique, the student should follow his teacher's direction. In the tale above, I didn't neglect my other studies, I simply added the Chaconne to my daily schedule. A good teacher will not take a first year student and drop Rodrigo's *Invocation and Dance* in their lap. For the rest of us more seasoned players, I believe we must temper the difficulty of the piece to our over-mastering desire to play it. We usually can accomplish more than we think we can when sufficiently motivated.

* And those clay tablets were so heavy!

—*Harry G. Pellegrin*

Deena Freed has posed the question for the *Enquiring Minds* section of the newsletter for the Fall edition---"How does one pick a piece that is appropriate to one's playing level and why is that important?" You will notice how Deena advertises one question but slips in two. I like a bargain as much as the next person, so let's discuss the second part.

It is important insofar as the student needs to remain interested in the guitar and not become discouraged. A steady diet of pieces that are too difficult can result in loss of interest. A steady diet of pieces that are too easy could render the same result. A steady diet of anything dulls the appetite.

This brings me to the first question which is intriguing but too narrow. Albert Blain said that a student should be working on three levels at all times: Pieces that the guitarist knows they can play and plays them every day for warm up and confidence building. Pieces that seem accessible but are not yet learned and/or playable. Very difficult pieces that one knows they can't play but hope to next year or the year after that.

Everyone knows what pieces they can, in fact, play. Everyone knows those pieces that are way too difficult to play today. Deena's question seems to be focused on that second level. Each person's technique is unique and so considerations as to the appropriate level will hinge on things like---Is my barré technique weak or strong?---Is my scale technique adequate?---Are my arpeggios even and clear?---Can I play fast enough for this piece?---Are my trills and ornament technique clean?--- Does the piece require tremolo technique and for how long?---Does it have advanced rasgueados and tapping techniques?---Are there difficult stretches for the left hand?---Are there unorthodox tunings in the piece?

A teacher can be very helpful in advising you about repertoire. Remember that every piece you master prepares you for the next challenge. If a piece resists your efforts, set it aside and return to it at a later date. Finally, pick music you love. You will have greater success with such music, no matter what the level may be!

—Dennis Turechek

Imagine everything you know as a circle.

Everything inside the circle is what you know. The edge of the circle is what you don't know..

The more we learn, and [the more we experience](#), the larger our circles grow.

But at the same time, our sensed ignorance (the outer edge of the circle) also grows.

The great Confucius (551-479 BC) is said to have said, "*Real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance.*" In music, there is no end. We could study for lifetimes and still not reach the end.

The more we learn, [the more there is to learn](#). The more we practice, the more aware we become of what's possible.

This creates a scenario that surprises many beginning and intermediate players.

And here it is: practicing at an advanced level feels very much like practicing at the earlier levels. At least emotionally.

We constantly [push our boundaries](#), and as such, spend much of our time at the edge of our circles. And it feels the same regardless of how much we know.

The ignorance we feel as beginners remains.

The problems change. The speed increases. The music becomes more complex. But the feeling of "missing something" remains. We continue to question and doubt.

In time, we become more comfortable with the unknown. We accept the duality of knowledge and ignorance. We come to terms with the incremental [improvements](#) gained by practicing guitar.

We take one daily step at a time. And with each conquered summit we see peaks far larger and further beyond.

To your musical progress,

—Allen Matthews

PS: If you'd like to strategically push your musical boundaries, it helps to follow a structured plan.

Instead of stabbing in the dark, you can choose to use your time with surgical precision. It's more fun and yields more noticeable progress.

The Woodshed® Classical Guitar Program can help you here.

Members see greater improvement in less time because they work on the right things, in the right way, at the right time. You can continue to play the music you already play while steering in new directions going forward.

If you'd like to give it a go and see how well you do, we'd love to work with you.

—Allen



William Simcoe



Dennis Turechek



Paul Sweeny



Matthew Downey



Harry G. Pellegrin

CGSUNY Fund Raiser

at St. Thomas' Church in Hamilton N.Y

Sunday, July 9, 2023 was a great day for us as both CGSUNY members and as guitarists. A number of us had played at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in lovely Hamilton, New York way back in 2017—pre-Covid. We had a wonderful experience—the pastor as well as the congregation and their guests were extremely enthusiastic for our performances. But then, as you all know, Covid 19 struck and suddenly (and for good reason!) live public performances were discontinued. So we were not about to play any of our usual calendar of CGSUNY events. No Unadilla, no Fall Fest (except virtual), no fun for us who live to get out there and play.

Thankfully, this is in the past and we are once again taking to the stage. For me, this was doubly wonderful as this was the second time I have been able to play out since my accident back in December. I did okay.

Frederic Chrislip opened our program — a tough act to follow—and gave us a wonderful setting of Psalm 51 “O Lord, Whose Grace” as composed by Anthony Holbourne using a paraphrase of that wonderful Psalm of David by Mary Sidney Herbert. This was a very good selection considering our venue! Always a joy to hear Fred play the lute and sing!

Next up was me. I went early as my tendons tighten rapidly after I warm up and stop playing. At our last Fall Fest, Donna Noyes Grosser played Torroba’s *Torija* from the *Castles of Spain Suite* and I remembered how much I had loved that piece as a yute and so I played it at this recital. I am told I did a nice job with it. [Thank you, Barbara!] After my accident, and when I could start to pick

up my guitar again, I was struck by a piece by Yoko Kanno entitled ‘*Hanna Wa Saku*’ which translates out to roughly *The Flowers will bloom again*. The piece was written for the survivors of the 2011 Tsunami in Fukushima Japan, intending to give them hope for a better future. I took this to heart. My performance of this piece for the benefit was well-received.

Our founder and past president **Dennis Turechek** followed me and performed a medley of three pieces from the Great American Songbook that he interconnected with some improvisational bridges. “Here’s That Rainy Day” by Jimmy Van Heusen—1953, “The Very Thought of You” by Ray Noble—1934, and “I’ll Remember April” by Gene DePaul—1941. These songs of what we consider *The Great American Songbook* are what future generations will remember as the quintessential pinnacle of the art of songwriting when many other more flashy or ‘popular’ composers have been forgotten. Dennis brought his evocative and soulful touch to these phenomenal melodies. I am a big fan boy of Dennis!

Matt Downey next performed his transcriptions for guitar composed by Joe Hiaschi for the film *My Neighbor Totoro*. The three pieces were *Rain*, *March*, and the *Totoro theme song*. Matt has a wonderful flare for arranging for the guitar and played these pieces flawlessly. I am also a big Matt Downey fan boy!

Up next, **William Simcoe**. But we all call him Bill. Bill also played three pieces by South American composer Abel Fleury. These were *Te Vas Milonga*, *A Flor De Llanto*, and *Milongo Del Ayer Argentina*.

His playing is always a joy to me. He brings the rhythms and compositional flow of Latin America to the music.

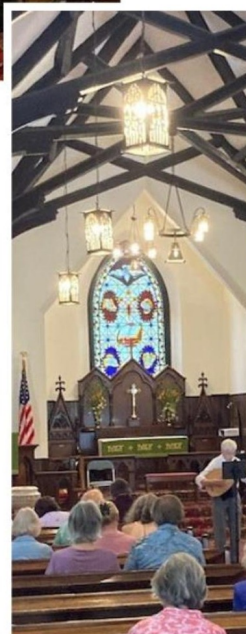
The last performer(s) was (were) our current president **Paul Sweeny** on guitar and his wife **Barbara Kaufman** (on recorder). Paul played two Villa Lobos pieces, the *Mazurca Choro* and the *Valsa Choro*. Both pieces performed flawlessly with the emotional input required to do justice to the music and enthrall the audience. Paul replaced his last selection with two pieces for guitar and recorder. My favorite duet team played *Un Dia de Sol* by Claudio Camisassa and *Urubú Malandro* (Mischievous Crow) by Lourival Carvalho/João de Barro. As always, the music was sublime. And that concluded a wonderful afternoon of music!

—Harry G. Pellegrin



THE CLASSICAL GUITAR SOCIETY OF UPSTATE NY CONCERT AT ST. THOMAS'

July 9, 2023



Emma Rush

Over the past decade, Emma Rush has established herself as one of Canada's preeminent classical guitarists. Known for her innovative programming and powerful stage presence, along with her warm sound and virtuosic technique, an event with Emma Rush is one to remember.

Emma Rush's concert career has commanded world recognition. Recent touring highlights include a four-city tour in China, starting with the Altamira Shanghai International Guitar Festival, appearances at major guitar festivals including Festival de Guitarras Lagos de Moreno (Mexico), the Nyköping Gitaarseminarium (Sweden), and a prestigious concert at the Internationales Gitarren Symposium, Iserlohn (Germany). She performs frequently in Europe and tours throughout North America. In 2016-17 she toured extensively in Eastern Canada as a Debut Atlantic artist. She performs regularly as Azuline Duo with flutist Sara Traficante and in 2018-19 the duo toured Western Canada through the Yukon, BC, and Alberta. Rush recently appeared in the McMichael Gallery's Group of Seven Guitar Project documentary alongside such notable guitarists as Bruce Cockburn, Jesse Cook, and Don Ross. In 2018 Rush completed two residencies to both create and research at the Sointula Art Shed in British Columbia and in Lübeck, Germany

"She captivated the audience with her charm, wit and technical prowess" Frankenpost, Germany

Emma Rush is passionate about bringing classical music to unusual spaces, and bringing unusual music to classical spaces. She regularly tours rural, remote, and other communities where live music experiences are rare. Her concerts are intimate and engaging and feature rarely heard historical works, little-known gems of the Latin American guitar repertoire, folkloric music from around the world, and, always, music by female composers.

Wake the Sigh is Rush's latest project. This program, recorded and released in 2020, showcases music written for guitar in the 19th century by women. In this significant contribution to the guitar library works by seven largely unknown composers are brought to light. All but three of the tracks are previously unrecorded. *Canadiana* (2017) features arrangements of songs by classic Canadian songwriters (Joni Mitchell, Gordon Lightfoot, Stan Rogers) and a new suite dedicated to Emma Rush by Canadian composer William Beauvais. Her debut album *Folklórica* (2014) takes listeners to four continents with works inspired by folk music and legend.

"Rush's technique is flawless throughout..." The Whole Note

Composers are eager for Emma Rush to perform their music and she has had works dedicated to her by the Canadian composers William Beauvais and Timothy Phelan, Mexican composer Winy Kellner, and Jaime Zenamon from Brazil. Rush is enthusiastic about expanding the Canadian guitar catalogue and has commissioned new works from Amy Brandon, Dale Kavanagh, Jeffrey McFadden, and Craig Visser.

Emma Rush is an avid collaborator. In addition to her activities with Azuline Duo, Rush performs Guitar Magic concerts with acoustic guitarist James Bryan (Philosopher Kings, Prozzak). The two perform high-energy sets that showcase classical and fingerstyle guitar playing and how the two can come together. Rush has toured with Canadian guitarist Timothy Phelan and German guitarist Eva Beneke.

Rush is an award-winning artist and was a prizewinner at the Columbus International Guitar Competition and the Great Lakes Guitar Competition. She has received three City of Hamilton Arts Awards. Her work has been supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, Hamilton City Enrichment Fund, and FACTOR.

Rush completed her graduate studies at the Hochschule für Musik in Detmold, Germany (2006), following an honours Bachelor of Music degree from Dalhousie University in Halifax, NS (2002).





João Luiz

Two time Latin Grammy nominee guitarist, educator, and composer João Luiz, began to play the popular music of his native Brazil professionally during his childhood and was later trained in classical guitar by his mentor Henrique Pinto. Winner of the 2006 Concert Artists Guild Competition as a member of the critically acclaimed Brasil Guitar Duo, João has performed extensively in the United States, Asia, Europe and Latin America. As a performer and composer João is equally at home with classical, Brazilian and world music; his solo guitar, chamber music, and concerto repertoire covers all the main works in the guitar literature from Dowland to Berio and Brazilian rhythms from choro to baião. His versatility led him to be chosen to collaborate with Yo-Yo Ma and Carlos Prieto on a project to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Cuban composer Leo Brouwer in a landmark concert in Cuba in 2014.

His arrangements and compositions have been recorded and played by Marina Piccinini, Fábio Zanon, Quaternaglia, Olson/De Cari Duo, Danilo Brito, Paquito

D’Rivera, Clarice Assad, Bridget Kibbey, Jiji, Sybarite 5, The Newman & Oltman guitar duo, Aquarelle Guitar Quartet, and the New York City Classical Guitar Society. Luiz’s **Harp Concerto Recife** written for Bridget Kibbey was premiered by the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra in 2019. His concertino for guitar and strings **MadriAfro I** was premiered in New York by the São Paulo Chamber Soloists in 2022.

Recent commissions include works for the USC Thornton School of Music guitar department, NYC Master Chorale, Duo Amaris, GFA, and Duo Sonidos. João has recorded more than fifteen CDs playing solo, duo, trio and in quartet, most of which have featured his arrangements of classical or Brazilian works. João also formed the Trio Virado with flutist Amy Porter and violist Jaime Amador to promote contemporary Latin American chamber music. The first CD of the trio, **Mangabeira** was released in the fall of 2015 featuring world premiere recordings of works written specially for the trio by Assad, Hand and Brouwer. João’s most recent solo album, **Central Guitar**, features twentieth century guitar works by Brazilian composers such as Gnattali, Guarnieri, and Gismonti. For his solo debut for Zoho records, João released in 2022 **From Spain to São Paulo** with Spanish guitar works by Sor, Torroba, Mompou, and Segovia.

João holds a masters degree from Mannes College, and as the recipient of the Augustine Foundation scholarship he earned his doctoral degree from Manhattan School of Music. Eager to expand the repertoire of his instrument João has commissioned and premiered works written for him by Sérgio Assad (24 studies), Leo Brouwer (Sonata n.7), Clarice Assad, David Leisner, Ronaldo Miranda, Mariel Mayz, Sebastian Zubieta, Marco Pereira, David Sampson, and Frederic Hand. João is the director of chamber music at CUNY Hunter College and also teaches guitar at Stony Brook University and Mannes College.



Fall Festival 2023 October 21 - 22

The evening concert headliner for the 2023 Fall Festival will be Brazilian guitarist Joao Luiz, and the afternoon Carolyn Rifembark performer will be Canadian guitarist Emma Rush.

This year we are arranging for blocks of hotel rooms at discount prices for members. The details will be provided in the next newsletter, in June. Let me know by return email if you are interested in hotel rooms. You do not have to commit at this time, we want to get an approximate number.

All members are invited to participate in the 2023 Fall Festival. Let me know by return email if you have an interest in performing solo or in ensemble. You do not have to commit at this time, we want to get an approximate number.

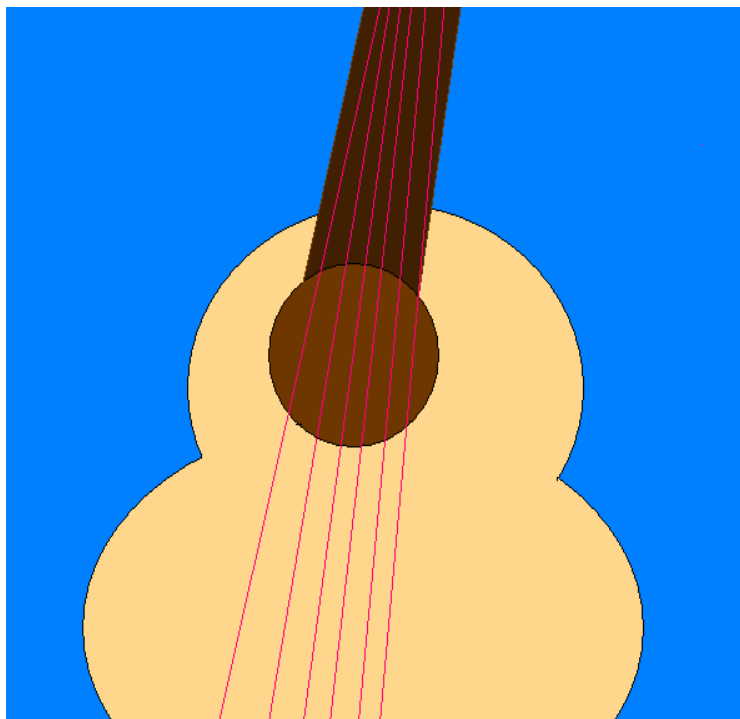
Monthly Virtual Zoom Soirées

CGSUNY is now offering Monthly Virtual Soirees open to our membership. We will host a Zoom meeting on the Third Sunday of Every Month at 5pm and send information out to our membership. Members may come to perform or watch the Virtual Soiree.

Any questions can be directed to current Secretary, Donna Noyes-Grosser, via email:

dngrosser@gmail.com

The Question for next quarter's issue:
How have your past and present guitar abilities and expectations changed in the last 40 years?



Our adult classical guitar group, *the Albany Guitar Ensemble*, is looking to expand. Currently we are a five member group, coached by Brett Grigsby, music faculty at Skidmore College. We rehearse every Wednesday morning in Saratoga. Brett offers performance opportunities several times a year.

Please call or email to set up an interview/audition:

bgrigsby@skidmore.edu or call

802-681-6569.

Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York Fall Festival

October 21-22, 2023
SUNY Oneonta Fine Arts Building

October 21, 2023

9:00 AM – 9:50 AM - Registration & Coffee
9:50 AM – Welcome - Paul Sweeny, President
10:00 AM – 10:20 AM - Warm up session – Ken Meyers
10:20 AM – 11:15 AM - Ensemble Rehearsal (all are welcome to participate)
11:20 AM – 12:30 PM - Morning Member Recital
12:30 PM – 2:00 PM - **LUNCH**
2:00 PM – 3:00 PM - Special Guest
3:00 PM – 3:45 PM - Afternoon Member Recital
4:00 PM – 5:00 PM – Regional Performer – Emma Rush
5:00 PM – 5:30 PM – Annual Meeting

Dinner on your own

7:00 PM – 7:15 PM – Preconcert interview with Joao Luiz
7:30 PM – 9:00 PM – International Performing Artist – Joao Luiz
9:00 PM – Reception

October 22, 2023

9 /9:30? AM - Ensemble Rehearsal/Performance (all are welcome to participate)
10:30 AM – 12:30 PM Master Class – Joao Luiz

This program may be subject to change.

See you next quarter in
the Winter Issue of

FretWire

Have some news?

Have an idea for an article?

*Have you written a piece that
you wish to present to the
membership?*

Consider submitting it for
possible inclusion in

Fret Wire

your Society's
quarterly newsletter!