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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:

Into the Rabbit, er, Sound hole! 1981 Jack Kirk guitar, Brooklyn, N.Y.

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.



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A Note from the CGSUNY President

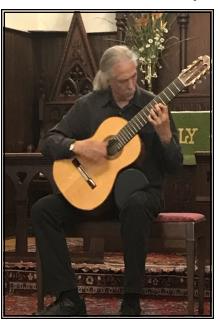
–Paul Sweeny

I, of course, often think about our Society and about other societies and about how we access music and performances. In this electronic age we can get so much for nothing. YouTube is full with more than a lifetime's worth of great artists and great repertoire.

I think we still, at least to some extent and at some times, long for in-person live music experiences. We can also access some of the next best thing: streamed live concerts. There are many organizations that provide this option for their concert series. I would recommend the very active Baltimore Classical Guitar Society and the Aus-Classical Guitar. They do great things locally (the kind of educaprojects which make sense in a centralized, essentially one-city location-a far cry from our geographically widespread area).

These societies also offer a certain number outstanding livestreamed (some free, some for a fee) concerts and classes. I would encourage any of our members to connect with these other organimaybe zations (and even become members) and become part of a larger guitar world.

But still of course come to our Fall Festival.



Fret Buzz from the Editor's Desk

A Younger Membership?

Every morning I hop out of bed—and I am that guy you see in the photo to the right. By the time I get to the bathroom, I am a sixty seven year old man, and reality sets in. I don't feel any different inside, but... Most of the board members of CGSUNY also hold the thicker part of the Book of Life in their left hands. Thankfully we have Matt, Ken and Giancarlo.

I also observe the demographics at our Fall festival each year. Yes, there are some fresh young faces, but most of us have known each other since before the flood. And while it is great to see such stalwart support over decades it also gives me pause to ponder what

in ten or fifteen years. I cer- to a similar fate as that tainly am not planning on which befell the Monday sticking around! I look in Musical Club of Althe mirror and see those *icv* bany—an hands drawing closer.

We often wonder what can be done to increase membership. After all, we do have a great organization that fills a need-even if one only considers the wonderful concert artists we bring to the stage every year at our Fall Festival.

When you consider the benefit recitals our professional membership presents throughout the year and the other events we are involved with. I can state with certainty that we are a vitally important cultural organization. How do we attract a younger demo-Without new graphic?

the CGSUNY will look like blood, we are on the road organization that survived for over 100 years before passing from existence through dwindling membership simply because the members got older and finally... Well, you know what happens!

> We often lament the lack of youth. We have collegiate teachers on our board and still can't seem to regularly get our students to join CGSUNY and stick around. So I ask the general membership to think about this. What can we do to encourage the young players to join our society? [Keggers are probably out of the question—it might have worked in my day, but now? Proba-

—Harry G. Pellegrin



bly not a good idea!] So I —as well as the rest of the board—are open to suggestions. How do we increase our appeal to generations other than us Boomers? I never want to see CGSUNY go the way of the MMofA. That was truly a sad day for the few remaining members well as a cultural loss for Albany and its environs. Let me know your thoughts!

Enquiring Minds Want to Know...

Ongoing Questions as Posed by Deena Freed

Which volumes of guitar 'classics' are most beloved and indispensable to you? What makes them so valuable?

It was once said that if one read the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, one would come out the other side a Christian. I do not mention this to be religious, but to say that I was often told that, similarly, if one studied—and mastered—the 20 Sor Studies as edited by Andres Segovia, Carcassi's Opus 60 Etudes, Carulli's Opus 114 Preludes and the ubiquitous Giuliani 120 Right Hand Studies, one emerged from this discipline as a guitarist. Once again, I do not profess that this is exactly infallible dogma, but it was prevailing wisdom in those ancient days of the early 1970's. It certainly didn't hurt!

I am old-school I guess. I do rely on these master works to teach my classical guitar students. Heck, I use the Giuliani's for any student interested in finger style guitar! As a twenty-something, I also incorporated the exhaustive as well as exhausting Carlevaro *Cuadernos* as well.

We live in a time where one need not seek out obscure antiquarian bookstores to find dusty, mouldy copies of obscure treatises (treati?) but simply click on any number of websites to find excellent teaching and training material. May I recommend the Swedish National Library's Boije Collection—free downloads of .pdf files—scans of well over a thousand collections and pieces gathered by Carl Boije back in the early 20th Century. Here you can peruse ancient early editions and hand-written manuscripts by the masters without risking infections from spores and mildew. https://musikverket.se/musikochteaterbiblioteket/ladda-ner-noter/boijes-samling/?lang=en This is an amazing resource.

But I digress. A very wonderful two volume set to have is Richard 'Rico" Stover's Complete Works of Agustin Barrios. This is a wonderful rabbit hole that will keep the player busy for years!

—Harry G. Pellegrin





Practicing Masterworks Part 1 Color and Timbre Variance

Critics throughout history have held that the charm of the guitar is in its intimate sound. Similarly, the most well-known guitar works found in various anthologies are those with precocious charm and brevity. It is for this reason that many students of the classical guitar often find themselves playing these pieces first. Etudes, preludes, Renaissance dances and lute songs, and character pieces find themselves all at once pedagogically sound for these students in their early careers and with great appeal for the player and the audience alike. But we all know this....

Years ago, I authored an article for CGSUNY titled Sonatas and Concerti for the classical guitar. In the article I focused on the 19th century sonatas of Sor and Giuliani as well as the concerti by Giuliani and Carulli. This was purely an article to share my exposure to what we term "masterworks."

It has been about 15 years since I wrote that article. Since then, I have found myself attracted to studying masterworks and smaller works alike and striving to program them together in a balanced manner.

In preparing these "balanced" recitals I have found that there are some rehearsal techniques that are universal across all music as well as those that are specific to programming entire works. For this article we will start with timbre:

Color-We play an instrument with a narrow dynamic range. We also play an instrument with a large timbral range. As I have gotten older, I have tried to avoid what my mentor Evan Drummond termed "typewriter music." Music devoid of tone color changes on any instrument will not be as engaging for an audience as those with a wide timbral palette. This is especially important in larger works as they require longer attention of the player and audience.

Color and timbre variance is often introduced in the preliminary phases of study as where on the string we employ free strokes, rest strokes, rolls, strums, or special effects such as rasgueado, percussion on the guitar body, and tambour on the strings. Often this is done in ensemble playing with repeated sections. While it is true that this will supply a nice "comfortable" approach to varying color, other methods are to be employed as well. Nail vs. Nail-flesh vs. Flesh ratios will supply further variance of tone. Add to this angle of attack/stroke. Add to this collapsing the tip joint vs. no collapse. Add to this further employing all of these at a uniform dynamic level to demonstrate digital control when varying color.

Great, so we have hit the practice room and have done our due diligence to experiment with color in our open string work, scales, RH arpeggios and are ready to apply our color/timbral palette to our masterwork. Now what composers like Roland Dyens will be quite particular about these various tone color devices which is certainly most appreciated in music of his language. Sergio Assad and Leo Brouwer also have done similar exact direction to their scores. Even in Britten's Nocturnal, both Bream and Britten allude to certain qualities which directly speak to tone color and are quite consistent through a variety of recordings.

What about 19th and early 20th century repertoire though?

For this we must look to a number of sources that can guide us in our decision making. For example, the aria transcriptions of Sor, the lied transcriptions of Mertz, as well as the operatic fantasies of the period all have source material strongly connected to text. Using text, we can determine what characteristics we try to bring out in our playing. Is the text prosaic, stating something flowery, sentimental, or effeminate? One option is to use free strokes with a nail-flesh/flesh tone around the rosette-sound hole-sul tasto area of the string. This might be just one phrase or even one melisma on a single word of the text

What if the text is brooding, dark, bleak, yet told in moment uncharacteristic of that character? Perhaps playing close to the bridge with a wide range of nail-flesh ratios/attack angles. Guitarists are often taught not to stroke the bass strings with an abrasive scratching stroke... yet... sometimes that may be the sound we need to bring out a stark tone. To quote Ben Verdery when teaching a masterclass at Hartwick, "play ugly."

Aside from inspiration from text, we can also look to viewing the texture of the music. For example. Single melodic lines and arpeggios without pinch strokes are some of the most facile passages we can play so it behooves us to thoroughly investigate the wider color palette. Some textures are a bit more to quite a bit more complex. Pinch strokes ranging from pi, im, ia, pim, ima, pma, pia still can be performed with a wide timbral range but may rely more on hand position on the string as opposed to finger and nail angle As the human hand is divided into three digital groupings (thumb, index, middle-ring-little finger) we will find greater range of independence between muscle groupings rather than digits of the same muscle group (ma pinch strokes). One of the best solutions towards finding a larger range with pinch strokes is to use a mix of mid-finger articulation and hand knuckle articulation. This can be great to employ at quiet dynamics especially as hand knuckle articulation.



lation is quite strong.

These devices however require more than execution. They also require reflection. Recording oneself at not only the standard 6-12 feet but also at 6-12 meters will help the player determine if their timbre variance is apparent enough to the ears of the audience. Most importantly though is to make sure that all these decisions are in service of the music and your own voice rather than purely a display of a wide timbre palette. After all, a masterwork is only one part of a full recital. I make the comparison to Little Red Riding Hood for students and people seeking my feedback. Sometimes it is better to save some of the cookies for Grandma rather than eating them all along the way.

—Giancarlo Sidoli







Born 96 million years ago— some 95.999 million years before the guitar was developed,
Fernandosaur managed to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds.

Despite the fact that he was quite old when he picked up the instrument, and the fact that the arms you see in the tintype above, are basically all the arms he had —try even tying your shoes with such short appendages—he still had some of his contemporaries convinced of his musicianship. And he also sold the Brooklyn Bridge once or twice. But it wasn't his lack of the necessary physique that ended his career. No, it was the scandalous nude images of him [see below] circulating in musical circles that precipitated his demise. Maybe an Ice Age as well...



The Wells Project / Slipping Into One: An Exploration of Nature, Sound, Art, Dance and Music – A Conversation with Guitarist/Composer Maria Zemantauski

—Donna Noyes-Grosser

Maria Zemantauski, member and former board member of CGSUNY, is a nylon string guitarist/composer whose style is influenced by a variety of musical genres, most notably Spanish classical, flamenco, and American fingerstyle. She has performed nationally and internationally to great acclaim. Maria lives in the Capital Region and in addition to her work as a professional guitarist and teacher, she Coordinates the Cultural Affairs Program for Hudson Valley Community College in Troy, New York. Her talent, creativity, love of our instrument, and diverse collaborations with other artists has led to an impressive array of accomplishments.

Recently, Maria received a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) to support her work on The Wells Project / Slipping Into One – the brainchild of Ellen Sinopoli, Artistic Director, Ellen Sinopoli Dance Company. The Wells Project is a collaborative effort among the Ellen Sinopoli Dance Company, sculptors John Van Alstine and Caroline Ramersdorfer, film director Bat-Sheva Gaez, and musicians Maria Zemantauski and Brian Melick. The goal of the project is to produce a 15-minute art film illustrating the creative synergy possible among artisans from different fields working together in the natural world and with different mediums. In this case, the natural world includes the Sacandaga River, and the mediums are sound, movement, steel, iron, marble, light, air, and film. The setting for the project is the Van Alstine and Ramersdorfer sculpture park and compound in Wells, New York, where filming will take place over the course of a year. The project is described in more detail on the Ellen Sinopoli website (https:// sinopolidances.org), and a short YouTube video about the project can be found at the following link: https:// www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bLqExEuAPc.

Maria and I met via Zoom to talk about her role and the funding she received from NYSCA for her work on The Wells Project. I began by asking about her work as a composer and collaboration with Ellen Sinopoli.

"Very early on in my performing career," Maria ex-

plained, "I felt it was important to 'sneak' some original guitar compositions into my programs, along with traditional pieces from the flamenco and classical guitar repertoire." Over years of performing on the guitar, Maria gradually built a performance program comprised entirely of her own compositions.

"It takes a long time to develop enough confidence in your own compositions", Maria told me, "And to feel comfortable sharing them with an audience." Maria believes that musicianship is all about sharing music with a live audience. The dynamic communication between audiences and musicians, so crucial to understanding what captures an audience, can only happen in a live venue. Maria always feels that it's the audience that lets her know what's working (or not) musically. "And I really like that!" she adds.

Maria's collaboration with Ellen Sinopoli began in 2003, when Ellen approached her to compose music for the dance "Falling". She had seen some of Maria's performances and was drawn to her compositional and playing style. Maria agreed, and "Falling" was the start of what has now been a more than 20-year collaboration. Having a well-respected, well-known choreographer like Ellen commission a composition from her was a huge confidence and career boost for Maria in her work as a composer/performer.

I asked Maria whether the dance drives the music, or vice versa, when she's collaborating with and composing for the Sinopoli dancers. In her eyes, dance always drives the composition and musical performance. "In the Flamenco world, dance is primary – the guitarist always follows the dancer's lead," Maria explained. "I think Ellen appreciated this sensibility and it's one of the reasons that she asked me to write the composition for "Falling".

When working on a composition for a particular dance, Ellen provides the vision for the dance and lets Maria create the music. Ellen's inspiration for the dance "Falling" was a vision of dancers interacting with an antebellum staircase and a swirl of flames. "The music should feel like it's falling". Maria transformed this image into music by starting at the 12th fret on the guitar and "falling down the fretboard to the first position" as the driving musical motif for the piece.

From a compositional perspective, working with dancers can be tricky. For example, when a dancer jumps or leaps and lands, the music must end when the dancer's feet hit the floor. Maria has a long-standing musical partnership with percussionist Brian Melick and they work as a performance team when accompanying the Sinopoli dancers with her compositions. "There's not a lot of room for error when playing for dancers," Maria explained. "It's a very collaborative process. Brian and I know that we are on a

musical journey together with each other and the dancers, and we know what journey we are on - the obvious path from A to B - so do we stay on that path or exit to an improvisational one? We usually exit and then pay very close attention to the dancers, so we re-enter and end at the right time in the music and place in the dance."

At this point in the discussion, we turned our attention to The Wells Project. Maria's role in the project, in partnership with Brian, is to create a musical score for the fifteenminute art film. The plan for the composition is to have four musical movements based on the seasons. While Maria and Brian have begun work on the score, the overall project timeframe is to begin filming some interviews this June, with additional filming in September 2024 and the Spring of 2025, and a release date sometime in 2025. Maria and Brian will record all four movements of the music live, with the goal of having clear metronomic markings so the music can be aligned with the film in the editing process.

From a musicians' point of view, the score will be a collaboration with their instruments (guitar and percussion), the sounds in the natural environment, and those made by sculptors Van Alstine and Ramersdorfer as they turn steel, iron, marble, light and air into works of art. "If you think about the percussive sounds of music and the sounds of these sculptors at work, the relationship becomes immediately clear", Maria explained. "Their work is all about hammering, banging, scraping, and filing - all things we've done with our instruments at some point". Because John's and Caroline's sculptures are on a large scale, they use hoists when mounting their work on the landscape, also creating musical sounds. The sounds of the sculptors at work can be recorded and manipulated using today's technology for use in the musical score. A central part of Maria's work will be to experiment with all the different sounds made by nature, in the sculptor's studios, and ultimately with the guitar and percussive instruments to compose the score.

"The sculpture park is right on the river, and the sounds of the river will feature prominently in the score," Maria told me. "I spent an overnight in Wells to record the sounds of the river during the day and at night. I brought wind chimes with me and recorded the sound of the chimes while I dangled them in the river to see what they sounded like, and also how the sound changed when the water came in contact with them."

Interestingly, and perhaps obviously because of the quality

of the sculptors' work, the rhythmic aspect of the composition is more straightforward than the melody. To bring the melody into focus, Maria and Brian devised a plan to use one of Van Alstine's sculptures, the Sisyphean Circle" (https://galvanizeit.org/project-gallery/sisyphean-circle-lx11) as a giant stringed musical instrument. They hope to create a set of steel strings (at least 20 feet long or more) to string up the sculpture and turn it into an "instrument" that can be bowed, plucked, or hit with a mallet. "The Sisyphean scale, is one of the more obscure musical scales, although it does seem to be popular in the genre of heavy metal and progressive rock." Maria said. "It doesn't have a clear tonal center or cadence. So, it's the perfect sound for the infinite Sisyphean Circle."

Another melodic connection for Maria between Van Alstine's works and music is the material he uses – iron. On the periodic chart of elements, iron is "fe". "As guitarists and musicians, we all know that if there are letters, we can create music from those letters," Maria said. "From the letters "f" and "e", a melodic connection can be made to E major, F Major, to the Phrygian mode from C major, to Spanish Phrygian which adds G# into the mix -- a boundless source of melodic and harmonic lines to explore as we develop the score for this intriguing film project."

Maria reflected with happy amazement that NYSCA funded for this sort of experimentation with sound by a musician. "It's very encouraging to have NYSCA recognize and give a vote of confidence to fund a composer to engage in and have the freedom to explore music and sounds with a focus on partnerships among artists of different genres," Maria said. "Especially since this type of exploration with sound has always been so much a part of the guitar." Works like "Cuban Landscapes With Rain" by Leo Brouwer were very important to Maria's development as a guitarist studying new musical ways of approaching the guitar and innovative techniques. She noted that an important part of the contemporary classical guitar repertoire includes experimentation with the instrument – like LAGQ's use of paper clips and wire ties to get unique and different sounds out of their guitar strings.

As our conversation ended, I asked Maria how she and her partners on The Wells Project envision the roll-out of the film. For the premier of the film, the project collaborators envision a viewing of the film perhaps followed by a live performance that showcases the techniques used in the film (stay tuned!). "There are many logistics to consider and work out – we're taking it one step at a time. The joy is in the journey!"



How Classical Guitar Music Helped Me Through an MRI

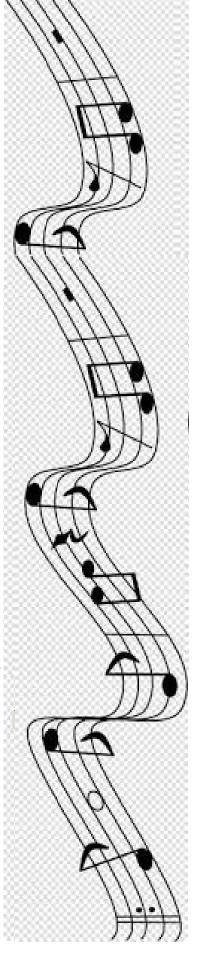
I was scheduled for hip replacement surgery this December. But there was a 'blip' on my pre-surgery EKG. That led me to a cardiologist, some further heart tests, and the diagnosis that showed a 'mass' in my heart that would require open heart surgery. Scary stuff. The cardiologist sent me to the hospital in Rochester for a heart MRI that lasted 1 hour and 45 minutes. But.. in the end, I was extremely relieved to find that there was nothing wrong with my heart, and that a hiatal hernia (harmless) showed up looking like that non-mass thingie and boy was I a happy camper! No mass. No heart surgery!

What this essay is really about is: How guitar music helped me get through the MRI. They asked me what kind of music I liked and they piped in the Pandora classical guitar station to the machine. As soon as that started, I felt like I was in an isolation booth listening to Bach, Merlin, Tárrega, and some beautiful things I didn't recognize. The guitar track became my main focus and all the techno/medical events faded into the background. I was lying on a comfortable cushioned bed and the music was playing, and I was thinking: this could be easily mistaken for a very expensive floating SPA experience. I felt so lucky and pampered. Time stood still, and I was actually kinda blissing out. But I was grateful that all my years of attachment to guitar music was paying off in this very strange way, And...No, I was not on a sedative.

The next thing that happened was that ugly, loud noises started popping while I was being told to hold my breath for the pictures and the MRI machine was moving along. To my great surprise, my brain turned those rude noises into a Peter and the Wolf-like 'story'. My mind pictured a tree, and a child was knocking on the door of the tree, but couldn't get in. So a big drill, the bassoon) showed up to drill under the door to get it open, then an ambulance came to help. Soon the tree was a happily occupied 'tree of life' with birds (the flute) calling and children singing. This drama repeated itself every time the sounds occurred, and I happily anticipated seeing my 'friends' (the tree, the child, the birds) every time they came back.

In the MRI, I kept my eyes closed mostly, but the 'tube' for the MRI seemed more like an embrace than an imprisonment. The strangest thing to me was how all of these pleasurable sensations came to me naturally: I did not will them to come, or control them. There was a bit of magic that seems to have been the product of having played music for 65 plus years. What an unexpected gift that turned out to be. And the biggest gift was that before I arrived home to Ithaca, the excellent news that the test was negative for a mass and that I wouldn't need heart surgery was already in my inbox.

I hope that when others read this, they will recognize the enormous degree that music brought comfort to me during this medical procedure. It transformed the experience and lit my imagination. It turned the experience on its head! I hope that you will also find the joy music can bring to all the difficult challenges you face. You may be in for some pleasant surprises!



—Deena Freed, January, 2024

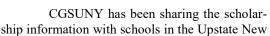
George Lesh Memorial Scholarship Report

The George Lesh Memorial Scholarship was created four years ago to honor the dedication and passion for life through music that George Lesh manifested. He was husband, father, teacher, and wonderful musician who constantly went above and beyond. He was the Secretary for The Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York for many years and had served as the NYSSMA Zone 8 coordinator while teaching Choir and General Music at Unatego Central School District. The Guitar Society has

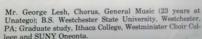
a fundraiser concert in June that is co-hosted by the Jericho Arts Council in Bainbridge, New York. The concert features middle and high school students performing on plucked string instruments in an ensemble setting with volunteers from the Guitar Society. Last June, we raised 700 dollars for the scholarship fund.

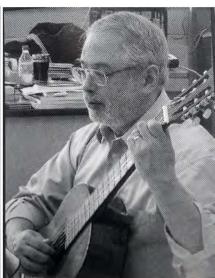
The first recipient of the award is a trumpet player named Julian Egelston from Oneida, New York. He is currently attending Onondaga Community College and is pursuing a degree in Music Education. The second awardee is Stephanie Vargas from Oxford, New York. She also plays the trumpet. She is attending State University of New York at Fredonia and is pursuing a degree in Music Education. Both students maintained high grade point averages and continued their degree track in music with glowing reviews from their advisors. CGSUNY is honored to provide scholarship opportunities to these students who have shown dedication to higher education.

The George Lesh Memorial scholarship is for high school seniors who plan to attend college for a degree related to music. The student must maintain passing grades and continue music as their degree track into the second semester. The scholarship process includes a written application, three letters of recommendation, and video audition materials. The scholarship applicants will be reviewed by a committee comprised of CGSUNY Board Members. The applications are due in mid-June and the awardee is announced in late August. The application can be found on the CGSUNY website. You can also obtain a copy via email from CGSUNY Treasurer, Matthew Downey. Email below.



















York area based on our current membership. We are trying to spread the information far and wide across New York as we continue grow the scholarship fund through concerts and donations. If this scholarship could assist someone you know in their pursuit of a degree in music, please share the information. We hope to award multiple scholarships each year and provide the opportunity for many years to come. If you would like to donate to the scholarship fund or share a story for the upcoming newsletter about George Lesh, contact our Treasurer.

mdowney@cgsuny.org



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.

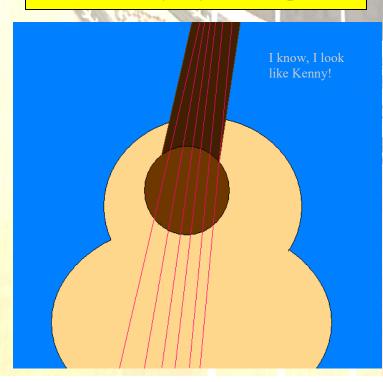
Any questions can be directed to current Secretary, William Simcoe, via email:

wsimcoe@gmail.com

The Question for next quarter's issue:

Tales of tremolo. Considering that success in playing tremolo is sought after by most of us, what have been your experiences and words of wisdom to enlighten the tremolo journey?

All members feel free to respond!



Guitar Events:

JiJi - Friday, April 11, 2024, 7:30 PM – UMASS Fine Arts Center, Amherst, MA (https://www.umass.edu/fineartscenter/)

Finger Lakes Guitar Quartet -

Thursday, April 18, 2024, 12:00 PM, Bulmer Telecommunications Center Auditorium, Hudson Valley Community College, 80 Vandenburgh Ave, Troy, NY. Free and open to the public, no tickets or reservations required (https://events.hvcc.edu/event/finger_lakes-guitar-quartet-1/)

Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana Fronteras – Friday, April 20, 2024, 8:30 PM - UMASS Fine Arts Center, Amherst, MA (https://www.umass.edu/fineartscenter/)

Manuel Barrueco - Wednesday, May 1, 2024, 7:30 PM, 92NY) https://www.92ny.org/events?
100 Events=Concerts&200 E Concerts=Classical)

Andrew York - Saturday, May 4, 2024, 7:30 PM, Boston, MA – Boston Classical Guitar Society (https://bostonguitar.org/event/andrew-york/)

Tommy Emmanuel – Friday, May 17th, 2024, Hart Theater, The Egg, Albany, New York (https://www.theegg.org/events/event/tommy-emmanuel/)

