

# *Fret Wire*

**Spring 2025**

***The CGSUNY  
Newsletter***

***Articles!***

***Info!***

***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](mailto:recitalguitarist@verizon.net)

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### *On our cover:*

It's not Photoshop, I swear!

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### *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.*

**SPRING 2025**

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## *The Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York*

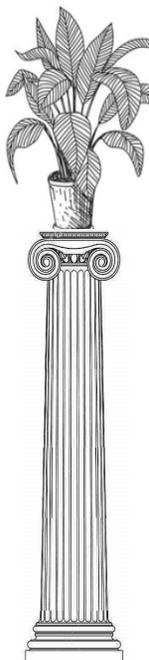
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## *A Note from the CGSUNY President*

—Paul Sweeny



## *Fret Buzz from the Editor's Desk*

### **Well, 2025 is the CGSUNY's Silver Anniversary!**

Time has really slipped by at an alarming rate, and time has brought both good and bad for us all personally as well as for the society-at-large.

Over the years we have had some amazingly gifted performers grace the various venues we have inhabited over the last twenty five years. The list is quiet large--and impressive. We have always maintained a quality level that rivals—and dare I say exceeds—other organizations of similar mission and status.

Of course, there have been times of, shall I say 'less than joyful emotion'? Covid dealt us a blow that, while not crippling, certainly hampered our ability to gather and dampened the spirits of many. The virtual soirees and festival met

a need but... And then there are the bitter losses. We lost two of the dearest people I have ever had the honor to have known—George Lesh and Carolyn Rifembark. Their dedication to the society was unparalleled. I think of Carolyn suffering an injury at seven thirty AM on the Saturday of our festival that did some real damage to her. I figured she'd go for medical treatment or at least head home. Nope, not Carolyn! She did seek attention, but was back at her station before the festival kicked off! That's dedication!

George... Where does one begin to assess what he gave to us all as members? As board secretary he was accurate and conscientious. As a person and a friend, he was always cheerful, friendly, witty, compassionate—even through his own personal

tragedies and illness. To know George was to love him. And I don't say that flip-pantly.

I know we lost others as well, but these two were in my direct sphere. But I didn't intend to mire us all in sorrow! So let me delve into what really keeps me drawn to the CGSUNY—the people! I have met and made life-long friends through the society. I know others have as well.

Our love for our wonderful instrument links us on a level far deeper than mere acquaintance! We may feel close to coworkers or neighbors, but when people possess a common love—an obsession—then there is an indefinable power to that.

—Harry G. Pellegrin



So in our twenty-fifth year of fellowship and harmony, let us truly feel gratitude to our founders such as Gail Hamilton and Dennis Turechek, as well as others, for that germ of an idea that was nurtured into the Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York!

Thanks, folks!

## The History of the Guitar

No one knows with any certainty how or when man first learned that the plucked string could produce music. Sociologists, historians and anthropologists surmise that the concept dates to the invention of the bow and arrow. It is felt that primitive man appreciated the twang of the bowstring—possibly having incorporated this sound into a pre-hunt ritual ceremony and/or post-hunt celebration. This sound has been refined through time, distilled into those modern stringed instruments in use today, in particular, for our study, the guitar.

The early stringed instruments as known today consisted of hunting bows to which gourds had been attached. These gourds served as resonating chambers, an attempt to amplify the sound produced. Early instruments fall into four main groups: idiophones, i.e. instruments the material of which is able to vibrate without any special tension (sticks and rattles); membranophones, or skin vibrators; chordophones, or string vibrators; aerophones or air vibrators. Until the advent of truly electronic instruments, these four groups remained a constant.

Lute-like chordophones date back as far as 2000 BC. They first appear in Mesopotamia where they were known as *Pantur*. These lutes belong to a family of instruments having long necks. They made their way to Egypt and Greece in approximately 1500 BC and eventually were brought to Persia. In Persia they became known as *Setar*, denoting a three-stringed instrument, *Cartar*, four stringed, and *Panctar* with five strings. (The Greek lute had a sound chest, consisting originally of a tortoise shell covered with stretched leather, made of a vaulted back joined directly to a flat soundboard.)

The long necked lutes of this period are still in use today in the form of the Arabic Tanbur and the Indian Tamburi. It was in Persia that lutes with more familiar proportions originally appeared. We know of these through clay figurines dating to 800 B.C. These short-necked lutes have necks formed by the tapering of the body, the division between the neck and the body unclear.

The short-necked lute made its way from Persia to India, and from there, to China. Today it is still to be found in China as the p'i-pa. A short-necked lute is also found in Japan. Here it is called a biwa.

If any one person can be credited with the introduction of the instrument to India and China during the first few centuries A.D., it would have to be a popular religious sect leader of the time named Mani. Mani was born circa 216 A.D. He was a noble Iranian, born in Ctesiphon. He was raised under the influence of an eclectic Babylonian Christian cult. When he was approximately twenty-five years of age, he claimed to have a new, enlightened religion 'revealed' to him. This religion borrowed heavily from Buddhism and Iranian mythology, mixed with Christian dogma. This religion's main interest to us today is that it was the only religion of its time to cultivate a lively personal relationship with the arts in its practitioners. Mani expressly required that his adherents steep themselves in poetry, music, and painting. An interesting though irrelevant bit of trivia is that St. Augustine was a follower of Mani for nine years.

We know that Mani traveled and proselytized throughout Northern India, Tibet, Chinese Turkistan and Khurastan. Soon after, we begin to see the lute gaining popularity in these areas. His followers credit him with the "invention of the lute". It may be that in preaching his religion, he converted people to the lute.

Around 270 A.D., things started to turn sour for Mani. When he returned to his native Persia and the court of Shapur I, he was forced to flee to avoid arrest. In 276 A.D., he was captured by the Zoroastrian Magi, who proceeded to flay him alive. His skin was then stuffed and put on public display. This makes modern music critics seem tame by comparison! An ivory dating from 968, which originated at Cordova and is now at the Louvre, is perhaps the oldest piece of evidence enabling us to establish the presence of the lute in Europe.

By the ninth century A.D., then, the lute was known in Europe, but it did not enjoy any real popularity outside Spain until the Renaissance. The Moorish invasions of Spain brought many Arabic styles of art, music and architecture to Spain. The Arabic influence on music included the introduction of the lute.

It is from the Arabic short lute that the instrument we usually associate the term with evolved. Even the word "lute" itself stems from the Arabic name 'ud or al 'ud, from which the Spanish formed the term "Laud". All the European languages base their word for "lute" on this term.

The 'ud was still far from the instrument we speak of as a lute. For one thing, the neck was still not a separate entity from the body. Also, the 'ud had two crescent sound-holes, much like viols of the same period. The transformation to a distinct neck and single central sound-hole probably took place in Spain towards the close of the fourteenth century. This is the lute that made its way to the rest of Europe.

As the lute won the hearts of musicians and music lovers in Europe, with the final ouster of the Moors from Spain, it has been theorized that the lute's popularity there turned to hatred. It has been postulated that the Spanish people acquired a definite distaste for all things Arabic in origin. Accordingly the Spanish luthiers decided to dispense with the vaulted body, the hard angle of the headstock. The lute was firmly established in the Europe by the fourteenth century. It was used in all music, becoming a favorite in ensemble work and vocal accompaniment.

By the early sixteenth century, the eleven-string, six course lute was beginning a metamorphosis that would ultimately bring about its decline in popularity during the next century. By the middle of the sixteenth century, the lute had eight courses. The courses were arranged as follows: the lowest (eighth) course consisted of an octave doubling (the bass string and a string having the pitch one octave above it), the seventh and sixth courses consisted of octave doublings, the fifth, fourth, third, and second courses consisted of unison doublings, and the first, or highest, course was a single string to facilitate playing clean melody lines. The performance and enjoyment of what was referred to as instrumental parlor music was an out-and-out fad in all strata of society. Those who could not afford a spinet or clavichord could get hold of an inexpensive lute, which could be had in English barber shops. The most popular instrument of the Renaissance was the lute, analogous to the piano in the 1800's and early 1900's and the guitar in our day. During the very late sixteenth century and the early to mid seventeenth

century, the lute continued to expand by the addition of bass courses. When the width of the fingerboard could no longer be spanned by the hand to body, the hard angle of the fret the lower courses, they (the lower courses) were strung completely free of the fingerboard and could not have their pitches altered except by retuning them. These instruments with outriggered courses are termed Archlutes. The Theorbo is one of the smaller Archlutes. It possesses thirteen courses, the highest two being single stringed. The Chitarrone is the largest Archlute. It has thirteen courses also; however, it is basically set up like a six course lute to which seven additional single bass courses have been added. These courses are exceedingly long. (Approximately twice as long as the other courses and three times the length of those found on a normal lute. The Chitarrone is an exceptionally large and extremely cumbersome instrument. Its neck has two separate peg boxes.)

The lute and the Archlutes lost their popularity due to this excessive complexity and size. The instrument was no longer highly portable and relatively inexpensive. Despite a small but significant resurgence in Germany during the lifetime of Bach, which included such notable and worthy composers as Bach, Weis, and Pachelbel contributing to its repertoire, the day of the lute was, for all intents and purposes, over. The Vihuela would persist and evolve, moving from comparative complexity to brilliant simplicity – a simplicity from which a high art would emerge.

### *The Guitar Arrives*

Published in 1655, Friar Juan Bermudo's treatise *Declaracion de Instrumentos Musicales* confirms much of our assumptions about the vihuela's configuration. He informs us that the Vihuela was strung with six courses (pairs) of strings. He also describes Vihuelas with additional courses but most scholars believe these were proposed instruments of his and that few if any were actually built. What was his main complaint about the Vihuela? The gut frets. The necks of lutes and vihuelas were not fretted with permanently affixed wire as with the guitar. Unfretted, these necks required the performer to tie lengths of gut around the neck in the correct placement and spacing to provide good intonation. This was a tricky art that many otherwise good performers of the day could not accomplish with consistent accuracy. Bermudo noted this to the detriment of the instrument. He did propose a few methods to improve accuracy of tying frets, but these were based on a Pythagorean scale—a scale containing unequal half steps—and not the even-temperament required for ensemble performance.

During this time, the terms *Vihuela* and *Guitar* were sometimes used interchangeably, the guitar was considered the peasant's instrument and the Vihuela a more upscale and up-town choice for the nobility. The guitar was a shallow, smaller bodied instrument with fewer courses, sometimes four and later five. Once again, our friend Bermudo describes the guitar of his day, referring to it as a small Vihuela.

By the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the five-course guitar's popularity had surpassed the Vihuela and four-course guitar in Europe and it was during this time that the guitar made its way to Latin America via the Spanish imperialistic push.

By the 1800's, the guitar had lost its paired courses for the most part and had gone to six individual strings. The body was still a long-wasted and narrow affair with relatively primitive bracing. The instrument pictured to the lower left (previous page) is an 1800 Jacobus Jany, built in Vienna. Small bodied, small voiced, these instruments still had a lute-like tone: a true transition instrument with the layout and tuning of the future coupled with the sound of the past

Antonio De Torres Jurado (1817-1892) is often referred to as the Stradivari of the guitar. His instruments codified the shape, design, and construction of the modern guitar. Torres was born in San Sebastian de Almería, June 18, 1817. By the age of 12 he was apprenticed to a carpenter. Circa 1842, Torres appears to have gone to work for José Pernas in Granada, where he began to build guitars. He soon returned to Sevilla, and set up shop.

Although he made some guitars during the 1840s, it was not until the 1850's that he took the advice of guitarist and composer Julian Arcas, that Torres made it his profession and he began building in earnest. Julian Arcas offered Torres advice on building. He then began experimenting in earnest with bracing, top shape, thickness and material. Torres reasoned that the soundboard was the critical factor in tone production. To increase its volume, he made his guitars not only larger and deeper, but fitted them with thinner, lighter soundboards that were arched in both directions, made possible by a system of fan bracing for strength. To prove that it was the top, and not the back and sides of the guitar that gave the instrument its sound, in 1862 he built a guitar with back and sides of papier-mâché. (This guitar resides in the Museo de la Musica in Barcelona and it is no longer playable.)

In 1868, Torres met Tárrega for the first time. Tárrega, then a young lad of seventeen, had come to Sevilla from Barcelona to buy a Torres from the maker of Julian Arcas' instrument. Torres offered him a modest guitar he had in stock, but on hearing him play, offered him a guitar he had made for himself a few years before. About 1870, he closed his shop in Sevilla, and moved back to Almeria where he and his wife opened up a china and crystal shop. About five years later, he began his "second epoch" as he refers to it on the labels of his guitars, building part-time when not busy in the china shop. After the death of his wife, Josefa, in 1883, Torres began to devote increasing amounts of time to building, making approximately twelve guitars a year until his death.

Torres guitars are divided into two epochs, the first, belonging to Sevilla from 1852-1870; the second, during the years 1871-1893 in Almeria. (Pictured on previous page, lower right: Francisco Tárrega [circa 1880's] playing a Torres instrument built in the truest 'Torres Style', one can readily see the more voluptuous body shape and almost modern proportions.) The guitars Torres made during the second epoch are so vastly superior to those of his contemporaries that their pattern changed the way guitars were built worldwide. Although they are not particularly loud by modern standards, they have a clear, balanced, firm and rounded tone, which projects very well. To this day, the Torres guitar pattern and design is a

model or as a 'jumping off place' for many builders.

While there are a small number of designs that are considered the norm for guitar construction, every new year brings new luthiers with novel ideas to the marketplace. Some of these ideas have been incorporated into the standard repertoire of guitar construction; more often than not, they go the way of outrigged strings or multiple necks.

With Torres, the bar had been pushed higher. Builders such as Vicente Arias, Manuel Ramirez, Santos Hernandez, Francisco Simplicio and Domingo Esteso propelled the development of the instrument in various ways, none can be said to have contributed as much or more than Torres, and the builders who most religiously followed his principles and practices before imparting their own instinctive and intrinsic modifications have continued to influence others and stand out as the masters.

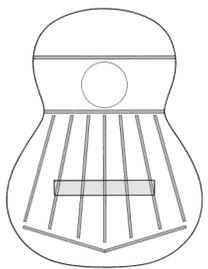
(Typical Torres-Hauser bracing pattern, above, consisting of seven symmetrical fan braces.)

José Ramirez II modified the bracing system of Torres to include a transverse brace further stiffening the top to produce a distinctive tone that was further enhanced and focused by José Ramirez III who moved from spruce to cedar for his top wood.

Hermann Hauser, father and son, both based their output on the Torres pattern and so enamored of the 1937 Hauser he played that Andrés Segovia declared it "The Greatest Guitar of the Epoch."

Hauser's guitars have also gained almost mythical status being considered a pattern to build from as evidenced by the beautiful Kenny Hill Munich. This instrument is patterned after Hauser, which implies a Torres influence but incorporates some of Mr. Hill's unique and excellent ideas as well. Its tone and voice are very Hauser-like.

—Harry G. Pellegrin



**As we and the world move into 2025,** my thoughts drift back to the very beginnings of CGSUNY and people who made it all possible. Perhaps the most important and fundamental contributor to our society has, some how, gone unrecognized until now. Gail Hamilton was the first president of CGSUNY. She

is also a co-founder of the society.

Gail was a guitar student of mine at SUCO when I carelessly said to her, "What this area needs is a guitar society!" Don't say anything within earshot of Gail unless you mean it! The next lesson she came with paperwork to establish non-profit status for a fine arts entity. She suggested the title for our dream society: (Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York) intuitively recognizing that the acronym (CGSUNY) would be easily recognized and remembered in upstate N.Y.

Gail understood how important it was to spread the word of this new guitar society which was intended to represent upstate N.Y. and she spearheaded performances in surrounding cities and towns to get our name out there. She was one of the five performers who played on Syracuse television in 2001 and performed in every guitar ensemble date that we arranged in Oneonta and beyond.

As a recruiter for CGSUNY, none was better than Gail. She brought Carolyn Rifembark into the fold. Everyone knows this name from the Carolyn Rifembark Memorial Concert which is offered every Fall Festival. It was Gail's idea to offer a Fall Festival in the first place with an international performer, a regional artist along with masterclasses and member performances. She recruited Bruce Walker, our second president who was recognized in the Fall 2009 Newsletter for his many contributions to CGSUNY with his guitar building and offering hand-made guitars to members for cost of materials only to benefit the society.

I would like to quote Don Witter who wrote many reviews in our newsletters until his death: This is from the newsletter published in winter 2007. "GAIL HAMILTON! Gail is a powerhouse and not only runs a horse ranch but just recently opened a laundry and I don't know where this woman gets her blood from! This great woman is an incredible human force and I admire her so much! She better not delete these words because she deserves a big hug and a pat on the back for all she has done in her endeavors."

I couldn't have said it better!

—Dennis Turechek

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# November, 2024 through February 2025 CGSUNY Soirées Reviews by Deena Freed

## November 2024 Soirée

This was our first soirée since the Fall Festival. We started with the sound check at 4:30. It was quite useful, as usual, for most of the players. But we were unable to solve the mystery of why the sound wasn't coming through for Giancarlo— so we had to miss his offerings during the Soiree. It was good to see a bigger than usual attendance. Perhaps the afterglow of the Fall Festival reminded them to come.

**Marc Hecker** started us off. He played Dionisio Aguado's (1784-1849, Spain) *Study #2*. This is taken from Aguado's Guitar Method and is considered an iconic part of the history of the beginning of modern classical guitar technique. It starts with block chords, then moves to arpeggios.

**Bill Simcoe** played a piece by Baden Powell (1937-2000, Brazil) called *Consolacão* (Consolation). Baden Powell was the composer of many popular classical/jazz pieces. This one starts with a preview of the main melody that moves rapidly up the fingerboard, then settles into a pleasant Brazilian rhythm that sounds like improvisation.

**Eric Roth** played "Aria" from a Suite in G-minor by Baroque composer Ernst Gottlieb Baron (1696-1760, Germany) It was originally written for lute. It was transcribed by José Mora-Jimenez, who is a Costa Rican composer currently living in the Netherlands. Several of his transcriptions of Baron's pieces are available on the internet and seem worthwhile to explore. This one featured a simple, singable melody in a minor key and had an elegant sound.

**Ric Chrislip** played William Byrd's (1540-1643, England) "From the Virgin's Womb", singing and playing lute accompaniment. This glorious Christmas song has a soaring, slow melody that speeds up, and calls us to Rejoice at the birth of the Christ child. It was helpful that Ric had posted the words to the song in the Chat box.

For the first time in soirée history, **Donna Noyes-Grosser** played a guitar solo to a recorded soundtrack. The melody was beautiful and stood out from the chordal accompaniment.

**Paul Sweeny and Barbara Kaufman**, guitar and recorder, played two movements from a *Sonata in C* by Italian Baroque composer Paolo Benedetto Bellinzani (1682-1757). The first piece was a slow movement that featured guitar and alto recorder that had a cheerful quality to it. The second movement featured an impressive sopranino recorder part.

## Second Round:

Marc played a short *Bourrée* by John Dowland. Bill played Baden Powell's *Canto de Ossanha*. This is a song for the god Ossanha, a Brazilian/African God who is associated with aphrodisiacs. It had a cheerful melody and rhythm that featured some surprises of dissonant chords. Eric played his own composition called "Sarabande". He's been experimenting with different versions of it and played the 'major version'. It was a delightful piece that featured short bits of melody that were repeated moved around the fingerboard.

We had an excellent variety of unusual and interesting music this time.

We can cheer for the players who find these special pieces and bring them to life for us. We can be inspired to look up the pieces of Ernst Gottlieb-Baron. We can be excited that we all continue new explorations and share them with each other in our once-a-month Soirees. Thank you to everyone who showed up. Our next Soiree will be the last one of the year.. I'm sure we'll hear some 'seasonal' favorites!

## December 2024 Soirée

This was our last Soirée of the Year and was held near the beginning of the holiday season. Most of the selections reflected holiday themes. We had a short list of performers, which influenced the session. Our customary sound check began at 4:30, as usual, thanks to Paul Sweeny.

**Ric Chrislip** led the Soirée with a lute and voice adaptation of Peter Warlock's (1894-1930, Britain) Christmas Carol called *Bethlehem Down*. It was written in 1927 for choral arrangement Ric played an adaptation for lute and voice. The words express a deep in sentiment about the moment of the birth of the Christ child and predict the poignancy of his persecution and death. The lyrics are beautifully written. This carol was referred to as 'a beautifully wrought little masterpiece' by one reviewer. Thanks to Ric for bringing it to us.

Next, **Marc Hecker** played a short piece by Mauro Giuliani (Italy, 1781-1829).

After that, **Dave Richman** played an arrangement of *Christmas Time is Here* by Vince Guaraldi (U.S. 1928-1976) It was a jazz arrangement that had an easy rhythm, and was charming and singable.

## Second Round:

First, Marc played a short piece from the 20th Century. Dave played half of the Giuliani *Eroica Sonata* - a selection full of 'guitaristic' passages featuring a variety of techniques and textures. It included some virtuosic sounding runs. Paul and Barbara closed the session with a lovely arrangement of Jeanette Isabella arranged for alto recorder and guitar.

Because we had fewer players, the players spent a bit more time adding interesting commentary and background to their performances. It led to a comfortable and friendly feel for the soirée.

A final note, I attempted to recommend a very excellent book I have used to heal hand problems and other painful issues caused by guitar playing. However my computer wasn't transmitting well, so here it is again. The book is [Conquering Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and Other Repetitive Strain Injuries](#) by Sharon J. Butler. It is a 'self-care' program that has helped me over the years, and has simple, easy to follow drawings and instructions. It's practical, and no-nonsense. I think it could be a valuable reference book and resource for all guitar players. It certainly helped me avoid surgery and has kept me pain-free for many years.

## January 2025 Soirée

This soirée marks the beginning of our 5th year of monthly Soirees. My review notes from January 2021 show many of the same players: Bill Simcoe, Paul Sweeny, Eric Roth. Giancarlo Sidoli, Dave Richman. Thanks so much to our consistent and loyal participants who show up to cheer our Sunday afternoons.

This month started, as usual, with a sound check at 4:30 facilitated by Paul Sweeny. These continue to provide troubleshooting to work out the transmission glitches for more seamless performance,

**Bill Simcoe** was the opening act. He played a *Milonga* by Alexandre Pilo (Brazil), a relatively unknown composer who Bill is familiar with through a friend of his. A Milonga is an Argentinean dance form that is similar to a tango. Bill's performance certainly had echoes of tango and it was fun to imagine couples sliding dramatically across the floor.

**Jarrold Prevost** played *Kaer Morhen*, a theme from the Witcher Video Game that was arranged by Nathan Mills. Nathan calls himself "a nerd for life" who specializes in making approachable arrangements of music from popular culture sources. This turned out to be a lovely piece with none of the sudden, dramatic effects that are characteristic of Witcher themes.

**Eric Roth** played the *Allemande* and *Courante* from Ernst Gottlieb Baron's (1696-1720, Germany) *Suite in G Minor*. Originally a lute suite, it was transcribed to A minor for guitar by Jose Mora Jiminez. Eric has brought other pieces from this wonderful suite to at least one previous Soiree. They are quite impressive and appealing. The *Allemande* was elegant and graceful. As is the baroque tradition, Eric increased the use of ornamentation on the repeats. The *Courante* was lively and had dance-like 'stomps' in it. It was a delightful contrast to the *Allemande*.

Paul played a waltz by Antonio Lauro (1917-1986, Venezuela). The Lauro waltzes are highly appealing pieces. They glide magically through beautiful melodic material with a kind of quiet excitement. They feel like old friends that you're so happy to see again.

Giancarlo suggested that we have a short discussion of guitar etudes that the teachers in the Society loved to teach. Some that were mentioned were the Villa-Lobos Etude #3, Carcassi opus 60, and Opus 59.

### Second Round:

Bill played *The Milonga for 3* by Piazzola, a piece that features some mesmerizing drone effects. Jarrold played a nice arrangement of *Foggy Dew* that contained harmonics and used fragments of the melody to beautiful effect. Paul and Barbara played a carefree and jolly sounding recorder and guitar duet called *Dia Del Sol* by Brazilian composer Claudio Conissasa.

Thanks to all who showed up, and especially to those who brightened our wintry Sunday afternoon by playing.

### February 2025 Soirée

Those who were intending to play at today's soirée gathered at 4:30 for the sound check session that always precedes the actual Soiree. To continue my tradition in these reviews, I advocate strongly for participating in the sound check. Paul Sweeny can often fix problems that vastly improve the quality of sound. And the sessions produce smoother running performances while the mysteries of Zoom are unraveled.

**Ric Chrislip** was our first performer today. He played an instrumental version of a sacred children's song called *If the Savior Stood Beside Me* by Sally De Ford. Ms. De Ford (b1991, USA) is a prolific composer of sacred songs which are sometimes sung by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Ric

adapted this to an instrumental piece for solo lute. The melody was soothing and innocent sounding, as is appropriate for a children's song. It was made even more beautiful by the choice of minor chords that accompanied the melody.

Next, **Dave Richman** played Agustin Barrios' (1885-1944, Paraguay) *Vals Number 3*. This piece was one of Barrios' music that first came into the spotlight soon after Segovia's passing. Guitar enthusiasts were justifiably impressed. By now, it feels like a welcome 'old friend'. The Vals begins with dreamy harmonics then launches into a catchy waltz rhythm with some great sounding glissandos. Then it moves to the upper registers. It's a bit longer than many waltzes, with 3 sections that are repeated.

After that, **P.J. Mintz** played *Leia's Theme* from the movie Star Wars. It was originally written by John Williams and this was a classical guitar adaptation by Nathan Mills. Jarrold Prevost played a different Mills adaptation at our last Soiree. Although P.J. said that this was harder than she expected, Mills still seems to do a good job of composing good sounding and interesting transpositions of music from pop sources. The piece featured an arpeggiated arrangement with the melody in the bass. There was a lovely section with harmonics in it. We were very curious about the luthier-built guitar that P.J. was playing. She said it was a reduced size Canadian made instrument, It was beautiful.

**Marc Hecker** played Mateo Carcassi *Prelude in C Major*. We're always glad to hear Carcassi's music since he was one of the small group of classical guitar technique originators that included Fernando Sor, and Mario Giuliani. This prelude featured arpeggios.

**Eric Roth** played his own piece called *Prelude*. He said it was a longer, stand-alone piece that he wrote in 2019. It featured poignant dissonances in an arpeggiated texture at first. It then moved to a block chord section, then back to the arpeggios and ending with harmonics. I thought it was attention-grabbing and beautiful.

**Paul Sweeny** played one of my favorite pieces next: Luis Merlin's (b 1959, Argentina) *Evocation* from his *Suite Del Recuerdo*. The Evocation is the first (and last) movement of the Suite. It is just plain gorgeous, featuring a slow, lingering melody that seems to express the feelings of looking back at the end of life with sadness that it passed so fast. Someone once said that it's the saddest piece in the guitar repertoire. Perhaps so, but still one of the most beautiful.

Next, Paul and Barbara played a cheerful piece called *Chorino Para Tiago* by Claudio Camissasa (b1957, Argentina). This short, 'fun' piece started with a chordal guitar introduction, then Barbara's recorder came in what what sounded like the sound of Peruvian flutes to me.

### Round 2:

Dave Richman played his arrangement of Dave Brubeck's iconic *Take 5*. We got to hear the other side of Dave's talents: jazz guitar. The piece was full of great guitar licks and did justice to what is the highest selling jazz single of all times. Marc played Fernando Sor's *Marche*. It was a short, chordal piece in march rhythm. Eric played Frederik Rungs' (1854-1914, Denmark) arpeggio study. He said he practices this piece to increase speed.

Thanks to people who showed up for the sound check, to play, and to listen. It's always nice to gather with fellow-guitar lovers on a Sunday afternoon. It's always interesting to hear what gems people have picked from well-known and obscure pieces available to us.

# If you ask two guitarists to supply left hand fingering for a particular passage, you will probably get at least five different fingering opinions/options!

Often editors and transcribers may simplify fingering to make the piece more accessible to the new student. More often, fingerings are often created to facilitate the performance of the seasoned professional! In most cases the performer should weigh out the benefits and deficits of edition fingering. Nothing is engraved in stone, even if the edition was created by a much loved and highly respected performer, transcriber or editor. What is deemed correct by one person may not be even playable for another. What may be deemed a necessary simplification for a student may leave the seasoned player unable to shape or color a phrase in the manner that seems fitting to him or her.

A popular edition of Sor's Opus 35 Number 17 contains a passage that is a case in point. No less a personage than Andres Segovia gathered twenty of Sor's Etudes into one volume and, according to the notes in this tome, he edited the pieces. It is well documented that Segovia recommended that the various voiced within a piece remain—as much as possible—on the same string to mitigate against tonal differences between, say, plain and wound strings. Segovia's intent is not known nor is it possible to ascertain beyond all doubt as death separates us from him. The edition fingering does pose a few difficulties from various standpoints: ease of execution, tonal coloration and even ease of memorization! Plus it violates Segovia's own rule—he always recommended that the melody should be kept on one string, when possible, rather than have it migrate among the strings. In his defense, Segovia may have simply used Sor's suggested fingering! Presented below is the passage as it stands in the aforementioned edition:

## As presented in Segovia's edition:

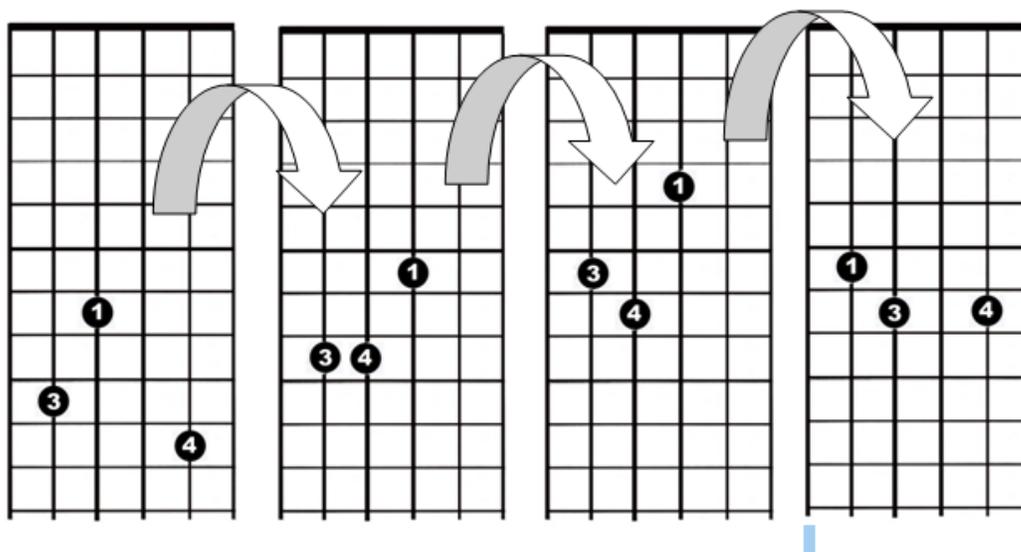
Note that the editor brings the melody (that could easily be played on the first string at the fifth fret when we observe what follows) up to the tenth fret on the second string. This allows the performer to 'sweeten' the note more than if it had been executed at the fifth fret but the fingering then nose-dives down to the first fret for the c natural on the second string. While this allows the rest of the passage to be executed in the student-friendly open position, the fingering is cumbersome in two respects. First, there is a large jump up to the tenth fret with a corresponding jump back to the first fret. The fingering then becomes a constantly shifting array of non-repeating hand shapes. There is no easily recognizable pattern to ease memorization and the tonal shifts from the warmth of fretted strings to the comparative brittle harshness of open treble strings. This is acceptable to a student's ears, but it leaves most seasoned players wanting something more. Here is my edition of this piece. I do not claim it is the only choice of fingering producing the finest performance results; it does produce a cohesive timbre and a repeating series of hand shapes that lead from the tenth fret back down to the open position without any large jumps or awkward fingerings.

Compare the continuity both in hand shape as well as tonal contrasted between the old edition and my suggested fingering:

### New edition:



The hand shapes break down into four distinct chord patterns that link and thereby allow the performer to maintain similar tonal through the passage and ease memorization through the cyclical nature of the execution of these hand shapes. The following diagrams illustrate this point.



This pattern then repeats with the same chord forms starting with the fourth finger in diagram one occupying the second string/eighth fret position. [My fingering doesn't keep melody totally on one string, but it remains on plain strings with no open 'jangle'.] The pattern is completed with the first diagramed chord executed at the second string/sixth fret. One caveat: the performer must maintain good left hand finger arch to cleanly perform the passage as many pitches are played 'behind' the fretted pitches. Flattened fingers will mute strings. I believe it was this phenomenon that caused the previous editor (or possibly Sor himself) to avoid the repetitive pattern and jump back to the open position.

—Harry G. Pellegrin

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extends our most sincere thanks to  
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Fall Festival!

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## 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@cgsuny.org](mailto:wsimcoe@cgsuny.org)**

### *Deena's Question for next quarter's issue:*

**What are the benefits of having a record keeping system for your practice time? Do you keep a journal, or set goals? If you teach, do you ask your students to keep records? Is record keeping just for kids?**

***All members feel free to respond!***



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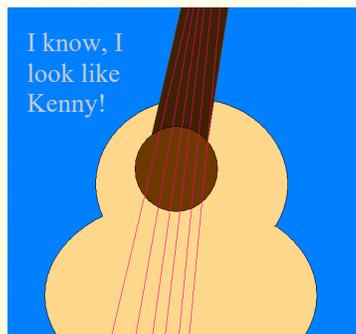
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The Glimmerglass Festival is a professional non-profit summer opera company dedicated to producing new productions each season. Rob Ainsley was appointed Artistic & General Director in 2022, and the 2023 season will be his first with Glimmerglass. The company continues its tradition of four new fully staged productions, now including three operas and one work of American musical theater, performed with full orchestra, large cast and no sound amplification. These four productions are supplemented by special performances, cabarets, concerts, lectures and symposiums throughout the season. The company continues to attract an international audience to the scenic Cooperstown area, where the talent of singers, directors, designers and staff from around the world converges in the Alice Busch Opera Theater to produce world-class opera and music theater.



See you next quarter in  
the Summer Issue of

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