

Fret Wire

The CGSUNY Newsletter

SUMMER 2022

Fall Festival Headliner!

Berta
Rojas



The Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York

www.cgsuny.org

Fret Wire

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On our cover: Our in-person Fall Festival 2022 headliner **Berta Rojas**, incomparable interpreter of the music of Agustin Barrios!
Photo by Natalia Ferreira

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.

SUMMER 2022

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A Note from the CGSUNY President

—Paul Sweeny

Warm Weather and In-person Music!!!

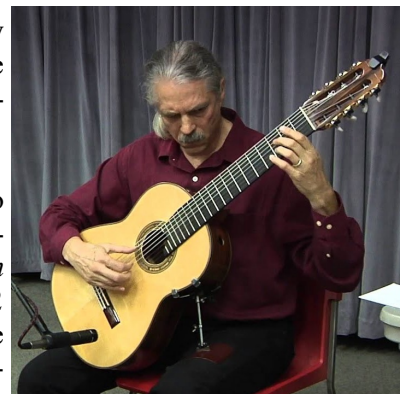
July, 2022

Summer's here and the time is right for guitar. I have been teaching a summer course at Binghamton University and it ended

yesterday. I look forward to more practice time. And I particularly look forward to going next week to the first-in—three-years in-person Guitar Seminar at the Mannes School of Music. It is run by the Society's old and dear friends Michael Newman and Laura Oltman. They, as did so many other presenters, managed with remote performances during the past few years; but there is truly no substitute, especially with classical

guitar, for the intimacy and immediacy of live and in person performances.

We at CGSUNY are also very excited about planning our 2022 *in person* Fall Festival (October 22 and 23). We will have Berta Rojas as our featured soloist, along with lutenist Michael Leopold (who we initially hired for the 2019 Festival), along with the usual members and Collegiate performances.



Fret Buzz from the Editor's Desk

YES!!!! We are just as excited as a group of guitarists can be! Not only are we returning to 'in-person' events—our flagship event, the *Fall Festival*—we are so fortunate to have the incomparable Berta Rojas for our headliner featured performer!

The CGSUNY Fall Festival will be presented at SUCO in Oneonta the weekend of the 22nd and 23rd of October. It will be incredibly wonderful to see all our friends face to face once again.

Back in early June, the 5th to be exact, the CGSUNY performed a multi-artist concert for the Unadilla Food Pantry. We usually perform this concert in the Fall so adding another date was a joy for us as well as the Food Pantry. Not

only did it get our professional membership out playing in public—and on the same bill—but we were also able to generate a substantial financial boost to the food pantry in these difficult times.

I am sorry to say that this was the first one of these benefits I have missed since being a CGSUNY member. It is a joy for me to perform with the Society and to see such a worthy cause gain from our efforts.

Look elsewhere in this issue for other's thoughts and reminiscences of the day!

At the previous Sunday Soiree I learned that I had inadvertently uploaded an early version of George's Memorial Waltz. There are a few errors including some rather unplayable chords.

Now please note that the melodic content and harmonic content are correct. I went wrong when I notated the piece without my guitar in hand. They say that the weakest pencil mark is stronger than the strongest memory — I proved it here. So in the off chance that you may wish to read through the piece, please contact me at recitalguitarist@verizon.net and I will send you the most recent—and corrected—.pdf file.

We are also excited to be working in association with Hudson Valley Community College's Cultural Affairs Director and CGSUNY member, Maria Zemantauski, on an event with Berta for students and the general public. Stay tuned for more details. This will most probably be held at HVCC Thursday at noon just prior to the Fall Festival weekend in Oneonta.

—Harry G. Pellegrin



All members of CGSUNY should know that I will gladly accept any article submissions for the newsletter for consideration. Our deadlines are rather flexible since as an electronic publication, we don't have to worry about issues with timely postal delivery.

Well, I am looking forward to our Fall Festival. Not only a brilliant headliner this year (as always!) but the distinct pleasure of seeing everyone in person again!

Berta Rojas ranks among today's foremost classical guitarists. She has been praised as "guitarist extraordinaire" by the Washington Post and by Classical Guitar Magazine as "Ambassador of the classical guitar."

Berta has been nominated three times for Latin Grammy Awards; in the category of Best Instrumental Album for *Día y Medio - A Day and a Half*, a duet with Paquito D'Rivera (2012), in the category of Best Classical Album, for her album *Salsa Roja* (2014), and more recently in the category of Best Tango Album, for her album *History of Tango* (2015), recorded with the Camerata Bariloche.

Berta's acknowledged warmth and musicality have earned her the admiration of audiences at major venues worldwide: the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall and the Frederick P. Rose Hall of Jazz at the Lincoln Center, in New York, London's South Bank Centre, the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., the National Concert Hall in Dublin, where she performed as a soloist with the Irish Radio and Television Orchestra, and the Flagey Studio 4 in Brussels, where she performed with the Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra for Belgian National Television.

In 2011, with guest Paquito D'Rivera, Berta initiated the four-year tour "In the Footsteps of Mangoré" which followed the travels of Agustín Barrios, pioneer of the classical guitar in the Americas. The duo performed in 20 Latin American and Caribbean countries, concluding the journey at the national theater of the capital of El Salvador, final resting place of the celebrated composer.

Berta takes her audience on a colorful journey of sound, embracing new works by composers in diverse genres. The journey is echoed in recordings such as *Cielo Abierto* (2006) and *Terraño* (2009), as well as the duo with Carlos Barbosa-Lima on *Alma y Corazón* (2007) and the celebrated *Intimate Barrios* (2008) featuring works by the great Paraguayan composer and guitarist. On her latest recording, *Felicidade* (2017), she pays tribute to Brazilian music, with

guest artists including Gilberto Gil, Toquinho and Ivan Lins.

In addition to continually enriching her own career through international tours and master classes, **Berta Rojas** is firmly committed to furthering and disseminating the classical guitar. A particular focus is on promoting the music of her country, Paraguay, as well as Latin American music more widely, and her ongoing support for the careers of young, upcoming guitarists.



Photo by: Natalia Ferreira

With this aim, she created the first online classical guitar competition, the Barrios World Wide Web Competition, in 2009, and was the Artistic Director of the Ibero-American Guitar Festival at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C., She also co-founded the young persons' Beatty Music Scholarship Competition for Classical Guitar, offering winners the opportunity to perform at the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

After initial studies in her native Paraguay with Felipe Sosa and Violeta de Mestral, Berta studied in Uruguay under Abel Carlevaro, Eduardo Fernández and Mario Payseé, and at the USA's Peabody Institute under Manuel Barrueco, Ray

Chester and Julian Gray. She has recently joined the prestigious Berklee College of Music as Associate Professor, sharing her knowledge and love of music with a select group of young guitarists from all over the world.

Berta Rojas has been ranked amongst the most influential women in the Hispanic world (EFE and EsGlobal 2014; 2017). She has been named a Fellow of the Americas by the US Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts for her artistic excellence, and honored by her country with the

title Illustrious Ambassador of Musical Art. In 2015 she was awarded the National Order of Merit of the Comuneros, and the title of Doctor honoris causa by two national universities. In 2017, in recognition of her outstanding contribution to culture, she received both the National Order of Merit Don José Falcón and the Carlos Colombino Award.

Biography reproduced from
www.bertarojas.com

Unadilla Food Pantry Benefit Concert

June 12, 2022.

—Giancarlo Sidoli

It's always such a privilege to get to play live music in support of a greater cause. One of the greatest ongoing traditions we have at CGSUNY is supporting the Unadilla Food Bank through fundraising concerts at the Unadilla First Presbyterian Church as a way of showing gratitude for the grants that the Unadilla community has given us in recent years.

The afternoon started off with our treasurer, **Matthew Downey** welcoming the audience and with him performing Etude by jazz guitarist Lee Ritenour, his own arrangements of Green and Cuterebra by Ron "Bumblefoot" Thal, and ending with his own composition "Sketch for George", a work dedicated to our late former secretary as well as Matt's mentor during elementary, middle and high school. Having known Matt for years, I've always seen a high level of performance in both classical and jazz guitar performance which was clearly exhibited in his performance set. Matt's arrangements and transcriptions utilize a great amount of color and textural variance which was very fitting for the repertoire he chose today and set the high standard of performance for the afternoon.

Bill Simcoe, a former board member who has since come back to our board of directors continued the afternoon's performances. Bill brought with him music from Spain, Italy, and South America. Romance de los Pinos by Federico Moreno Torroba, Interludio by Roberto di Marino, O Connell's Lamentation arr. by Glen Weiser Sambossa by Celso Machado, and Verano Porteno by Astor Piazzolla. Bill brings a great amount of energy to his interpretations while always remaining in control of his sound. He also is the guitarist that introduced me to a wide range of South American music during CGSUNY Festivals, which incidentally, I am finally getting around to playing, but more on that later...

Dennis Turechek, our ex-officio board member, former president, and one of mine and Matt's early mentors with the guitar was next and with him came two medley's from the great American songbook with tunes by Cole Porter, Antonio Carlos Jobim, amongst many others. Hearing his performances of these two medley's took me back to 2004 when I first heard his playing live at the Latte Lounge in Oneonta, NY.

On talking with Dennis before the concert, he mentioned gravitating towards medley's more which are not seen as commonly in solo jazz guitar performance. It was really refreshing to see the various arrangements played back to back without the intermittent soloing as it allowed the melody to have more sentimentality and nostalgia.

Performing next was our society's president **Paul Sweeny**. Paul performed selections from two giants of Guitarrama-Sicilienne and March op. 33 no. 3 Fernando Sor and Bolero in A minor op 317 no. 5. by Ferdinando Carulli. Hearing music from the classical period is at times a rarity at guitar events and I for one am very glad that Paul brought these two pieces with their infectious charm. The Sor exhibited this quite well given it's extended natural harmonic section. Paul performed both selections with not only great tone and musicality but also with retaining the character of the Sicilienne and Bolero in their respective countries of origin (Italy and Spain).

I, **Giancarlo Sidoli** continued the program next with one of my current projects-the ballads of Scotland and England. This afternoon I chose "Willie o' Winsbury" (Child 100) "The House Carpenter" (Child 243) and "Geordie" (Child 209). For each ballad I try to borrow performance practice ideas from both Fernando Sor and Mauro Giuliani as both composers arranged music from that region of Europe. Additionally I told the stories of each ballad as the arrangements themselves would only cover three-five of the multiple verses in the originals. The next part of my performance set was dedicated to the second half of "Suite del Recuerdo" by Jose Luis Merlin. Although I have played the Carnivalito for some time now the Evocation and the Joropo were newer pieces to me but I am glad I was able to air them out in concert for the first time. This suite is a fine introduction to extended techniques particularly chasquido and rasgueado. What makes this suite also an important staple of repertoire is that it is Argentine repertoire that recalls Argentine music before the Nuevo Tango boom of the 1980's.

Concluding our program was **Paul and his wife Barbara Kaufman** performing a short suite of songs inspired by birds ranging from the Renaissance and Baroque periods to contemporary pop music by Leonard Cohen. What really was the cherry on top was the fact that they performed it from the balcony which really completed the whole "bird" theme of the performance! The balance between the two instruments was quite good and it definitely made for a memorable finale of the concert!

In total we were able raise \$535 dollars for the food pantry and it was great to see a large coming out as there were numerous audience members who show a great appreciation for our performances and for the society's presence in the community.



Variations on the Theme

Simple Gifts

Traditional Shaker Melody,
arranged and augmented by
Harry G. Pellegrin
& Dr. Thomas Smith

⑥ = Re

Dedicated to Paul Sweeny

Theme

Moderato

Guitar

5

9

13

17



Variations on the Theme: Simple Gifts

A Traditional Shaker Melody

The Shakers were a peaceful people who had believed in gender and racial equality. The Shakers stimulated intellectual and artistic growth within their Society. Much like the Amish, they encouraged simplicity in dress, speech, and manner, and lived in rural enclaves away from the influences of society at large. The Shakers believed it was possible to create and live in a more perfected society upon earth. It was due to their worship practices that included energetic dance movement, music, that they were referred to as the 'Shakers'.

The Shakers practiced communal living, where all property was shared. They required their membership to practice celibacy and forbade marriage, obviously, in order to sustain the sect, had to adopt children and recruit converts. For those that were adopted, at the age of 21 they were given a choice to either stay within the community or were free to depart. Unfortunately for the Shakers, most chose departure.

They referred to those who lived outside their communities as people from "The World." Despite their beliefs, they permitted contact with outsiders. Shaker communities were agriculturally based, with men and women living separated, though women enjoyed greater respect than their 19th century counterparts in "The World", being often chosen for leadership and prominent ministry roles.

Spontaneous dancing was part of Shaker worship until the early 1800s, when it was replaced by more prearranged patterns of dance. More spontaneous dancing returned during the 1840s, but by the end of the 19th century dancing ceased during worship. Services from this point forward consisted of singing hymns, testimony, a sermon, and prayer.]

The Shaker hymn, *Simple Gifts*, was composed by Elder Joseph Brackett in 1848. It was part of the worship life of the Shaker faith community as a dance song. Aaron Copland used the melody in his ballet, *Appalachian Spring*. This melody is also the basis for the song *Lord of the Dance*. 'Simple Gifts' was a dancing song. The Shakers called it a quick dance.

*'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.
When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we will not be ashamed,
To turn, turn will be our delight,
Till by turning, turning we come round right.*

By the early 20th century, the once numerous Shaker communities were failing and closing. By mid-century, new federal laws were passed denying control of adoption to religious groups. Today, in the 21st century, a tiny remnant of the Shaker community still exists. As of 2017, there are only two remaining Shakers: Brother Arnold Hadd, then aged 58, and Sister June Carpenter, then aged 77. These remaining Shakers hope that sincere newcomers will join them.

That's the background there — it was necessary. More background: Additionally, I had assigned this melody in simplified form to a relatively new student. It is sometimes prudent to assign a known melody so the novice reader can hear their mistakes through melodic familiarity. I was horsing around with the melody when with another student (one well ahead of the simplified arrangement) and he, Dr. Thomas Smith, began to play the melody with some rather nice arpeggiations. The die was cast. I started messing about with a minor variation of the theme.

How does one go about crafting variations on a well-known and very familiar theme? As we all know, Aaron Copland—for whom no introduction is needed—used this hauntingly majestic melody in his incredible ballet score *Appalachian Spring*. His harmonization us mesmerizing. Well, I knew I wouldn't be doing anything quite so memorable or superbly intellectual with the melody, but between Tom and me we thought we might do some justice to the theme and variations form. The arpeggio variation was completed by Tom in record time and is lovely. Not to be outdone, I had the minor variation completed in decent time. Mine was an easy variation since I could feel more free to compose rather than modify with the change from major to minor. The following variation in thirds and another in triplet rhythm were more time-consuming. In fact, Tom and I worked on the complete set of variations for probably three months.

Now when I say that "I composed the minor variation" with all honesty, I must say that Tom made suggestions. Some of them I paid attention to! Please note that in the

fifth and sixth measures there is a notation: “*For effect, these two measures can be played minus the bass notes.*” Tom believes the dramatic effect is heightened by a more sparse approach. Frankly, I liked the continuation of the bass line. Still, in all honesty, when he plays this variation, I find nothing that ‘bothers’ my ear. There are a few places in the score where what I would consider *artistic rhythmic interpretation* could not be successfully rendered by the notational software I use (Finale PrintMusic). Not Finale's fault— my version is almost twenty years old. They have, no doubt, reworked the software many times in the ensuing years since my purchase!

But what inspired the variation? Well, I knew I wanted it to be in a *minor*. Measures three and four were inspired by a clinker produced by misplaced fingers and fatigue. Both Tom and I liked the resulting harmonic ‘hook’ that resulted. Serendipity. Never look a gift horse in the mouth, I guess.

The dedication? The complete set of variations is dedicated to

CGSUNY President Paul Sweeny. I know him to be fond of the melody presented in the theme. All fine artists should have a piece dedicated to them. Why should Paul be left out?

For anyone interested in seeing the complete score, it is not published by a ‘real’ publishing house. It is available through LULU.com —the complete address for the piece is:

<https://www.lulu.com/shop/harry-pellegrin-and-dr-thomas-smith/variations-on-the-shaker-melody-simple-gifts/paperback/product-8g528e.html?page=1&pageSize=4>

Yeah, that’s a mouthful!

I hope you enjoy this sample.

—Harry G. Pellegrin

Variation Three

Andante (Molto Rubato)

4

8

12

16

For effect, these two measures can be played minus the bass notes

rit. *a tempo*

Harm.

Tone Production (Part Three)

—Harry G. Pellegrin

Tirando and Apoyando Two Right-hand Techniques

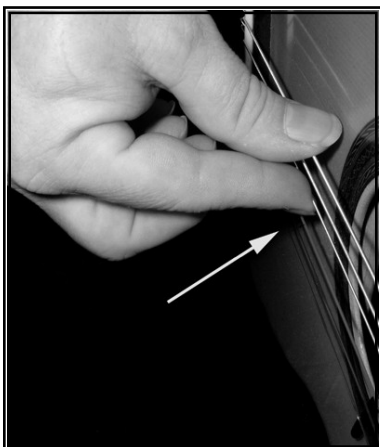
Tirando (Free Stroke)

Tirando or *Free stroke* is the basic right hand pluck technique. With the Free Stroke, the fingers of the right pluck the intended string and pass by any and all adjacent strings to complete its travel in a neutral position about half way between the string and the palm. By necessity, the finger must bend slightly during the execution of the pluck to avoid the other strings, usually at the second knuckle back from the fingertip.

The photograph to the right shows the free **stroke**. In this stroke, the finger strikes the string at an upward angle allowing it to pass the adjacent string without touching it. Because the finger is expending energy to curl up towards the palm as well as (some would say) having to lose impetus through increased accuracy to miss that adjacent string, the **free** stroke is a thinner sound, less volume being the most obvious difference.



Place your right hand in the position demonstrated in the photograph to the right. Rest the thumb on the sixth string. Pluck the second string with the index (i) finger observing the motion of the finger and the action of the knuckles as the string is plucked and immediately after.



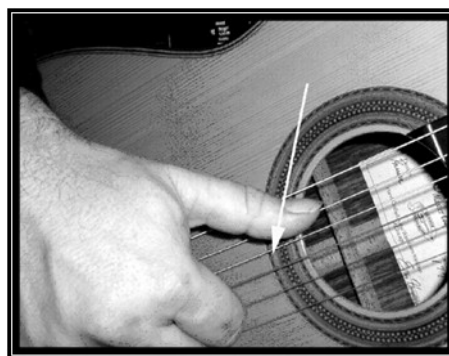
Apoyando (Rest Stroke)

Referred to more commonly as the 'rest' stroke, it is easily understood by thinking of the *apoyando* or *rest stroke* as a right hand plucking technique whereby the plucking finger travels past the string as it is plucked and comes

to rest on the string adjacent to it. [For example: when plucking the G string, the finger comes to rest on the D string.]

The photograph shows the **apoyando** or rest stroke. Think of it sort of like the way a bass player plucks the strings. Please note that the right hand has not rotated away from proper position. Some players often rotate the wrist to switch to *apoyando* mode and I believe it is this *unnecessary* movement that had pushed some players and instructors away from the **apoyando back in the 1970's**. Please note that in the photo the finger has just completed plucking the G string and is resting on the D string. The finger is straight; the entire weight of the finger has been used to produce a fat, round and loud tone. There are some fine players who have eschewed the *apoyando* and do play at good volume and with full tone. They have expended years of extra effort to do so. Why not use a tool that works? *Apoyando* is not evil!

The Thumb



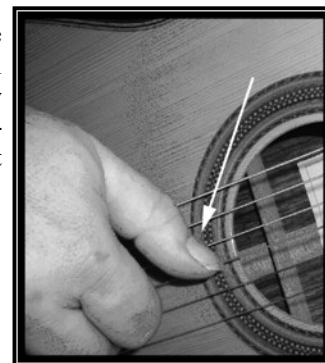
The thumb is positioned as seen in the photograph to the left. The out-board edge of the thumbnail is ready to strike the fifth (A) string with the arrow indicating the direction of travel. The thumb remains straight and pivots

from the palm knuckle, there should be no bending of the other knuckles.

Upon completing the stroke, the thumb is still straight. It may rotate very slightly to return to the pre-pluck position in the first photo.

Being the largest digit on the hand, the thumb carries quite a bit of weight, both physically and tonally. The thumb will produce the heaviest tone and the most volume.

Control is the key to not having a thumb that overpowers the fingers.



Thanks for bearing with a three-parter!

YOU CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL

—Dennis Turechek

In the late 1960's Albert Blain, who was my guitar teacher, used to send me out to perform jobs that continued to come to him long after he retired from performing. I assume he did the same for other students of his as well. (*Ed. Note: Yup!*) As long as you were willing and could acquit yourself well while performing in, sometimes, unusual and unorthodox circumstances, some extra money could be earned to help pay the rent. For example, he recommended me for a gig playing "THE ONLY JEALOUSY OF EMER" a poem by Yeats set to music by Barbara Benary for a small chamber group with guitar. The guitar was tuned in 5ths! It seems that Barbara Benary was a violinist. The music director was Tom Johnson and we performed it for several weeks at *Café La Mama* in the Village.

The most challenging gig he ever recommended me for was to perform Opus #22 by Anton Webern for E^b clarinet, soprano, and guitar scheduled to be performed at the Manhattan School of Music that fall as part of a contemporary concert. I had little, or no, experience with atonal music at that time and knew I would have my hands full. It was written in 1922 and had no performances in Webern's lifetime. By the late 1960's it had maybe a couple at most.

Luckily, I got the music two months before the scheduled performance and so I took a trip back to Chadron Nebraska where I grew up to gain isolation for some serious immersion in this music. This period of Webern was at his most stringent and uncompromising treatment of atonal music. Opus #22 consists of three songs which last less than 4 minutes altogether. No measure in any of the parts has a repeating rhythm. The guitar part is written in two clefs, bass and treble making reading even more difficult. I determined I would just memorize the piece rather than relying on reading it figuring I would play it with more conviction that way. I also vowed I would get every note, every rhythm, every dynamic marking, etc., absolutely perfect as we were going to be rehearsed by Paul Jacobs in his apartment before the performance.

After having rehearsed it for a few weeks on our own we found ourselves in the apartment of the aforementioned Paul Jacobs. We were feeling pretty good about ourselves as we had put in some serious time working on a piece which after all lasted less than 4 minutes. Paul gave us a tempo and we began. Two notes later Paul said, "Hold it!" The very first note in Opus #18 is middle C in the guitar part. I had transposed it up an octave!

To put your mind at ease, the rest of this first song and the remaining two were fine. A few suggestions about articulation and we were good to go. The performance went well.

Tonebase:

**A Web-based Subscription Service
for Classical Guitar Worth A Try!**

—Donna Noyes Grosser

If you don't know *tonebase.co*, and you are interested in a web-based music education subscription service dedicated to the classical guitar, you should!

I first read about *tonebase.co* (spelled with a lower case "t") in an issue of *Classical Guitar Magazine* – now fully merged with *Acoustic Guitar* – in an article featuring tonebase as an "exciting" new resource for classical guitarists (see <https://classicalguitarmagazine.com/tonebase-an-exciting-new-resource-for-classical-guitarists/>). A follow-up article in *Classical Guitar* (<https://classicalguitarmagazine.com/cg-news-tonebase-goes-global-introduces-v2/>) describes the phenomenal progress the *tonebase.co* made in recruiting many elite classical guitarists in working with them to produce a premier learning platform for classical guitarist.

Co-founded by three graduates of Yale, Igor Lichtman, Chris Garwood, and Abhi Nayar, *tonebase.co* now includes a team of twenty-one individuals (including the three co-founders) with a diverse expertise in guitar, music education, composition, video production, copywriting, etc. Recently, *tonebase.co* has added a new platform focusing on piano. If you are interested in learning more about this talented team, visit <https://www.tonebase.co/about>.

As an early subscriber to *tonebase.co*, it has been impressive to watch and invaluable to experience the expansion of this excellent guitar education resource. *tonebase.co* offers guitarists a wide range of educational opportunities. The platform allows users to identify their guitar level (from beginner to expert) and offers learners video lessons by world-renowned guitarists in technique (e.g., scales, arpeggios, tone production, fingerings, etc.) and repertoire (Baroque/Renaissance, classical/19th century, 20th century, modern/contemporary, concert repertoire, and etudes). Many of the lessons include workbooks (technique) and down-loadable scores (repertoire) in PDF format. In addition to the video lessons, *tonebase* offers live, interactive workshops with prominent guitarists on a range of guitar-related topics as well as music theory, composition, and other educational topics. These live-streamed sessions are videotaped for ongoing access on the platform. Participants who join live have the added bonus of being able to interact with featured guitarists. To highlight just a few of these workshops, recently there were two with Laura Snowden (Working with Living Composers and Studying with Julian Bream; Top Tips on Practicing) and three with Adam Levin (Developing an Artistic Personality; The Poetry of the Guitar – Vibrato and Timbre; Exploring Tone Colors on the Guitar). *tonebase* also has a series of Artist Workshops, featuring guitarists such as Judicael Perroy and Andrew York, in discussion with hosts about their experiences as career musicians.

To describe the guitarists involved in *tonebase* is essentially to list the most prominent figures in the classical guitar world today. Ranging from artists such as Sergio Assad, Pepe Romero to Ben Verdery and Sharon Isbin, to Stephanie Jones and Ana Vidovic, *tonebase* has recruited guitarist from across generations to offer a truly unique learning platform for classical guitarists at all levels. A free, one-month trial subscription is available to those interested, and worth checking out. For more information about *tonebase*, including free trial opportunities and subscription prices, visit <https://www.tonebase.co>.

Rock Classics: Essential Elements: Guitar Ensembles Late Beginner Level A Retrospective

-Matt Downey

About eight years ago, I was working with a music instructor at Tapestry Charter School in Buffalo, NY. As a part of my master's degree track, I requested to observe and team teach with Joe Mafoud in order to expand my overall guitar pedagogy. Joe had an amazing program where student's seventh through twelfth grade students used a guitar ensemble class to meet their mandated music credit. These students would have a concert in the Winter and Spring and used these classes to prepare for their performance. It was what I thought did not exist in most public schools in New York: a fretted string ensemble for a general music elective. To poke a little fun at myself...it was a charter school and not a public school. *(Just a small side note – Joe donated over 30 guitars to the school to help build the program)*

It was a great experience to work with Joe and his students at Tapestry Charter School. The students would use classical finger-style technique and read three and four part ensemble music. The music did vary depending on age range but most times you had multiple levels of skill in each class. The ensemble approach allowed the instructor to use vertical teaching alignment where some students play a simple part, but others can go to the next level and play a harder part. This allows the group to perform etudes and songs together at a varied level of skill. Many public school general music teachers teach the guitar as a "Unit" for two weeks using a method book and move onto the next unit once complete.

While observing at the charter school, I was amazed to see a select group perform *Low Rider* by War. A few students were on the melody, a few students were playing a harmony part, and the remaining students played the bass part. The teacher played the auxiliary percussion parts with them. It was wonderful to see such tight rhythms and clear melodies from high school students. After the class, Joe handed me a book titled: *Rock Classics: Essential Elements Guitar Ensembles Late Beginner Level*. When I turned to

the table of contents, I saw a huge list of great rock tunes including *Low Rider*. Some other songs in the book were *Aqualung* by Jethro Tull, *Crazy Train* by Black Sabbath, and *Smoke on the Water* by Deep Purple (to list some and not all.)

I now work at Bainbridge Guilford Central School District as their choir instructor and general music teacher. I use my general music classes as a fretted string laboratory where we use multiple instruments to play varied styles of music together as a group. I do a lot of arranging for my classes to have parts for each instrument and different songs to perform. Even though I put in a lot of time in my own arrangements, I find myself grabbing up the *Rock Classics Ensemble* book and using it a lot through my school year. I have a lot of fun teaching the parts and the students absolutely love playing songs from the book. I had a group of volunteer seventh and eighth graders perform *Low Rider* at the Moving Up Day Ceremony at the end of the school year this past June. Someone from the guidance department later that day congratulated me and said they never knew guitar, ukulele, and banjos could perform music like that together. She also said she was really proud of the students for performing for the entire school. It was a great way to end the school year for me and the students.

I would highly suggest purchasing *Rock Classics: Essential Elements Guitar Ensembles Late Beginner Level*. It has a lot of great songs and it does not require advanced skills and techniques to perform the selections. It is a great way to perform something different in the classical guitar ensemble setting while still fulfilling that deep desire to be a rock guitarist. You can find this book on Amazon, Strings By Mail, and the Hal Leonard website.

Our Silent Auction!

During our in-person Fall Fest, the silent auction will be on the schedule again—a blast from the past! If you have any instrument, accessory, sheet music or guitar-related chachki that you no longer need and wish to donate to the CGSUNY, now is the time to consider doing it!

Please contact me at
ElainePellegrin_72@hotmail.com
and we can discuss this!

See you next quarter in
the Fall Issue of

Fret Wire

The CGSUNY Newsletter

