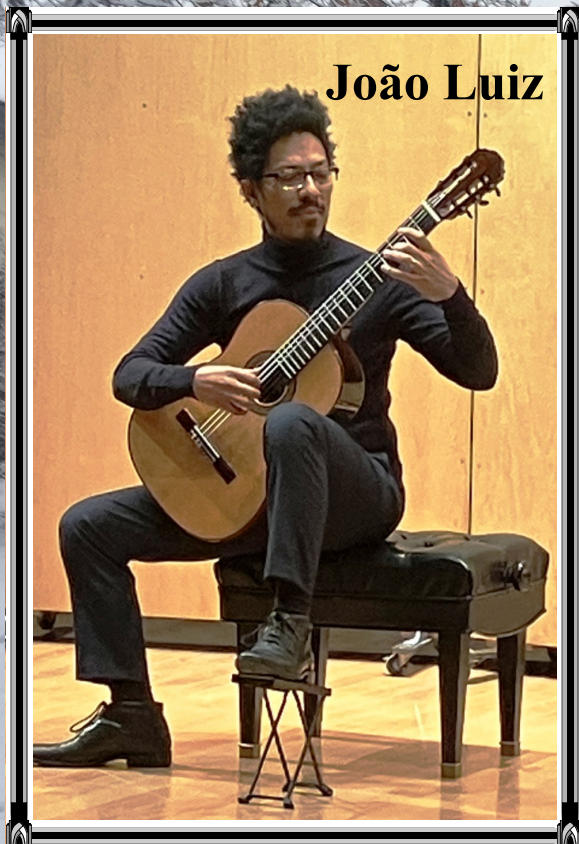


Fret Wire

Winter 2023-24

The CGSUNY Newsletter



Unadilla Benefit

Fall Fest Reviews!

Articles

Guitar Stuff!

Fret Wire

Fret Wire staff:

Editor:

Harry G. Pellegrin

Advisory Staff:

**Matthew Downey
Deena Freed
Dennis Turechek**

Society Secretary and
Distribution Coordinator:

William Simcoe

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:
Winter Adventures

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.

WINTER 2023/24

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Contributors: (Past and Present)

**Matthew Downey
Deena Freed
Donna Noyes-Grosser
Allen Matthews
Kenneth Meyers
Elaine D. Pellegrin
Harry G. Pellegrin
Eric Roth
Giancarlo Sidoli
Paul Sweeny
Dennis Turechek**

The Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York

www.cgsuny.org

Phone: 607-865-8775

**Address: 627 Flax Island Road
Otego, NY 13825**

A Note from the CGSUNY President

—Paul Sweeny

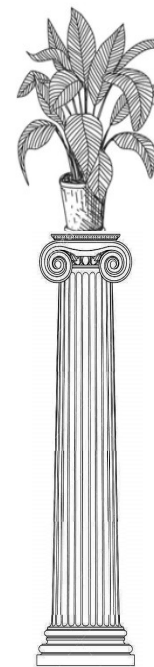
As this year winds down, I look backward and forward.

We had a good year with an in-person Festival and monthly online soirees. There is no substitute for live music performance, but the Zoom meetings allow people who live nowhere near one another to visit and share music.

We will see in the Spring of 2024 another Collegiate Recital, which will feature both live-over Zoom and pre-recorded performances then and of course our Fall Festival. Beyond that we have plans for various fundraisers

in different locales. The large geographic area we cover is both a strength and a weakness. We have plans to diversify the venues of some events and thus better serve our varied membership.

In closing this message (and the year), I want to extend deep appreciation for all of the members of our Board of Directors. We have the highest level of contribution of any time in my decade-plus tenure on the Board. Thanks to all the work that goes on behind the scenes.



Fret Buzz from the Editor's Desk

—Harry G. Pellegrin

WOW! What a great weekend! Just arrived home after our 23rd annual Fall Festival. Aside from the wonderful music, it was awesome to see old friends and just relax, reminisce, and plan for the future. We had two very fine, personable and warm artists for our headliner and regional performers. The master class was excellent. I got my ear pierced while waiting for a table at Applebee's... But that's another story.

Many thanks to Dennis Turechek for arranging and organizing special pricing for the Holiday Inn (where we stayed) and the Marriott Courtyard in Oneonta. We had never stayed on the other side of the river before and found the amenities 'over there' to be excellent. Try the French Onion

Soup at Panera...

Intermission

I write this the day after Thanksgiving and am realizing how much we all have for which to be thankful. Our little society has flourished from humble beginnings twenty odd years ago thanks to the work of our founders and subsequent leadership. I personally am blessed to count the current board members as dear friends.

Aside from friends and family, I feel blessed to be a part of the general classical guitar world, albeit in a very minor capacity. It has been my love ever since I heard Segovia play on New York's WQXR back in the early 1960's. I am sure you all feel this way about our magnificent instrument!

Well, I hope you all had a wonderful and blessed Thanksgiving!

The holiday season has officially arrived and my email box has been seeing an influx of announcements for holiday concerts. This is such a great thing to see after our COVID19 years made us all musical and physical hermits. Please check your daily papers as well as your inbox for holiday music! Locally for me, Emmanuel Baptist Choir is presenting a concert of Christmas music Sunday December 17th at 1PM at the church at 275 Church Street in Albany. Admission is free though donations are always welcome. It's always a nice concert!

Look forward to our Spring



concerts and recitals, both benefit and open membership events for CGSUNY. I am hoping to arrange at least one afternoon soiree before the Spring has sprung. We shall keep you posted, if not in the newsletter, then by special emailing.

Until next time, keep in tune and play as often as you can!

Enquiring Minds Want to Know...

Ongoing Questions as Posed by Deena Freed

How have your past and present guitar abilities and expectations changed in the last 40 years?

I guess I can take a shot at this one. Forty years ago I was out of college for three years and wondering what to do with my life. As many had told me, the world was not looking for another guitarist. I had found another path and it turned out to be an almost greater joy. Still, I yearned to play more guitar. Six years later I was involved in a crash that resulted in, among all the damage one would expect from a major mishap, a fractured spine. The orthopedic surgeon I had on my case was great though and he got me patched up to the point where after a week in ICU and another three weeks on my back (literally as well as figuratively) I was walking—though oddly. I complained that my left side was numb. No more guitar. The surgeon said I should consider myself lucky not to be shopping for a wheel chair. It would take another seven years for the nerves to re-route and the numbness to pass. Then I had to re-learn the guitar! The head knowledge was mostly there, but the years of muscle tone and muscle memory were gone.

When I was fresh from school and full of youthful energy, I could play well enough, but I had little heart. After my crash and recovery, I was no longer the moderate technician I had once been, but I believe I played from a deeper emotional level. You all know my heart is on my sleeve most of the time when I play—yeah, always.

Then came last December and you all know about that. Once again, I was told I wouldn't be able to play for the better part of a year. By July I was able to play well enough to do the Hamilton benefit recital. But it was painful and took a week to recover from that effort. Even now my left hand index finger is still more or less a non-starter. I was able to play at Unadilla and our Fall Fest, though still not at even the level I could perform at after my previous rehabilitation.

So to answer the question: Forty years ago I wanted to conquer the world with blazing technique. Now I want to touch hearts with genuine emotion—and if my technique is barely adequate, as long as I accomplish that aforementioned mission, I am happy. Aim to touch hearts, not try to dazzle ears.

—*Harry G. Pellegrin*

The CGSUNY has had many fine writers among its membership since the beginning. Just peruse the newsletters from 2001 on and you will see what I mean. The reviews of the Fall Festivals by Don Witter Jr. until his death gave an incredible boost to the popularity of the event. Way back in Jan. 2006, an article entitled “Living Life At 60 Beats...Per Minute” by Deena Freed (then Deena Burke) still sticks in my mind as a poignant piece of writing. And her reviews of the soirees I find to be as enjoyable as the soirees themselves, if not more so. All this to impress upon the writers in our membership that the question that Deena has posited as well as the previous question she supplied in the previous newsletter were posted to inspire us to pick up pen and submit something to Harry.

“How have your past and present guitar abilities and expectations changed in the last 40 years?” That is the question! If I were to attempt to answer this question, which is obviously directed at really old people like me, I would need to expand the time frame to 55 years when I first earnestly began my studies with Albert Blain. One might think that expectations would be highest in the beginning. My being a jazz guitarist with an eye on playing jazz on the classical guitar made it seem that sorting out what the right hand had to do would be all that was required. Nine years later of intense work on Carcassi, Giuliani, Bach, Sor, Tárrega, Villa-Lobos, etc., etc. I awoke and said, “Wait a minute, wasn't I a jazz guitarist?” My expectation had been too low. I could now play solo concerts and chamber music with other instruments. I could play operas and with orchestras and many styles of music were now my domain: early music to avant-garde and everything in between. In the last ten years or so of my so-called career, I have concentrated almost exclusively on the Great American Songbook for my inspiration. I have in a sense returned to the lower expectations I began with.

As to my abilities on the classical guitar, I no longer try to play the Chaconne or Prelude, Fugue and Allegro by Bach or Opus 22 by Fernando Sor etc.. My recent bout with arthritis has all but silenced me presently but the standard tunes still pique and challenge my composer skills to arrange in medleys resembling classical forms. My physical abilities are diminished, of course, but I have found many ways to get the effects I want so I guess my musical smarts have increased. All of my arrangements are tailor-made so I can mitigate any physical difficulties in advance.

In summation, I would say my expectations started relatively low and rose to an apex and then gradually descended as old age and stiff fingers took hold. As to my abilities, they grew also and declined as old age unfolded. If music was only about expectations and abilities I would have to stop playing. My musical imagination, however, has increased continuously spurred on by those limitations.

—*Dennis Turechek*

11/27/23

CGSUNY Fall Festival 2023 Featured Performer Concert and Master Class Guitarist João Luiz

Two time-honored traditions of CGSUNY's Fall Festival are the Saturday evening concert and Sunday morning Master Class offered by the Festival's featured performer. This year, CGSUNY tapped the wealth of musical talent in New York State to present two-time Latin Grammy nominee João Luiz to eager audiences gathered in SUNY Oneonta's Fine Arts Building. João, who holds both a Master's and doctorate from Mannes, is director of chamber music and head of guitar studies at CUNY Hunter College and teaches guitar at and Mannes College and Stony Brook University on Long Island. He plays on guitars made by Sérgio Abreu and uses Augustine strings.

On Saturday evening, João's program featured a range of classical, Brazilian, and world music representative of his versatile repertoire and showcasing his virtuosic playing. João began his program with his own impressive arrangement of the "*Lachrimae Pavan*" by the English composer and Lutenist John Dowland. Continuing with music in the classical tradition, the first half of João's program included a selection of important etudes by guitar masters Guilliani, Sor, and Tarrega, concluding with Tarrega's lyrical favorite, "*Lagrima*".

Following intermission, João opened the second half of his program with one of his own compositions, "*Sereno*", explaining to the audience that he rarely performs his music since many of his compositions are commissioned by others and for a wide range of instruments and orchestration. "*Sereno*" is the second movement of a suite composed by Luiz as a homage to Sylvius Leopold Weiss, and takes the form of an allemande. Next, João played two choros composed by Heitor Villa-Lobos – "*Mazurka-Choro*" and "*Choro n.1*" (choro tipico brasileiro), regaling the audience with his flare and style. Rounding out the second half of the program, João played compositions dedicated to João Luiz by Leo Brouwer and Sergio Assad. João played three movements of Brouwer's "*Sonata n.7*", (*Sonera Meticulosa*, *Carlos Embale sin ti*, and *Soledad del cañaveral*) with energy and colorful tone, sharing with the audience his experiences with Brouwer, including a trip to Cuba with cellist Yo-Yo Ma. João then played two studies by Sergio Assad (*Mignoniana* and *Badeniana*), from among 24 studies recently written for the guitar with remarkable precision and technique. João noted the importance of this collection of studies for the guitar, surveying the most significant Brazilian rhythms (for more on this, see João's comments and video of *Mignoniana* posted on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/79rSYsJw99o?si=mlgx14hSa9mDcEo9>)). After a round of applause, João returned for an encore to play a final "*Choro*" by French composer Jean Pierre Michaux. Immediately following the concert, João joined the audience for a reception and informal exchange about all things guitar.

On Sunday morning, four eager students of the guitar performed in the Master Class conducted by João Luiz. Participants



ranged in age and experience and included two high school students, a college student, and a member of CGSUNY with strong professional performance experience. An astute teacher, João provided instruction tailored to each guitarist and the music performed. He advised students on topics ranging from harmony and technique to tone and musicality. The Master Class concluded with an opportunity for audience members to ask questions about any aspect of performance of interest.

—Donna Noyes-Grosser



Review: Emma Rush Recital, CGSUNY Fall Festival, October 21st, 2023

Emma Rush was the featured performer for the Rifenbark Memorial Concert of 2023. She comes from Hamilton, Canada and is part of the classical guitar 'community' in Canada. She has a unique repertoire that includes pieces of women composers from the 19th century and pieces she commissioned based on the Canadian painter, William Blair Bruce.

The first thing I noticed about Emma was how at ease she is in performance and how much she is able to convey her enjoyment of the music to the audience. Everything she played was approachable, and was played with a kind heart and gentle technique and good interpretation of the music. She also is impressive as an adventuress and barrier-breaker in bringing new music to guitar audiences.

Emma started the Rifenbark Concert with 3 pieces she had discovered in her research of women composers in Europe. First was Julia Piston's (1800-1842) Air Varie de Vive Henri IV which started as a 'spare' sounding early music theme, then moved into interesting and beautiful variations. Queen Mab started with some lovely opposing harmonies and Puck started with arpeggios and had a beauty that reminded me of Mertz in its poignancy. Then she played 2 short and charming polkas by Susan C. Dommett, another 19th century composer.



The next piece was Homage a Paco De Lucia by the Dutch Composer Annette Kruisbrink. This piece does a good job of bridging Flamenco and Classical Guitar sounds. It included tremolo and rescuadoes. It was played with finesse and a light touch that did not overdo the harsher sounds often found in Flamenco. That was followed by a piece influenced by Eddy Van Halen and had jazz influences.



Emma with board members Giancarlo Sidoli and Donna Noyes-Grosser

The next part of the program was devoted to pieces Emma had commissioned that were based on paintings by William Blair Bruce who was Canada's first impressionist painter, and Emma's relative. All three pieces were by Canadian, women composers. Dale Kavanagh's piece featured musical quotes from Marin Marais and was particularly beautiful.

She finished the program with the wonderful Suite De Requerdo by Luis Merlin (1952) with its 4 Argentinean dance movements. She played the opening Evocation with wonderful feeling and beautiful tone. The other movements were excellent as well, with a particular attention to achieving the spirit of the dances without slamming the chords really loud.

For an encore, she played Gerald Garcia's study called Sunflower, a short and fast piece with lots of skillful techniques.

Emma packed a lot of great music into her concert. It was refreshing and surprising and I enjoyed it all. It was some of the best music I had *never* heard before! Many other audience members also commented on how much they liked the concert.

—Deena Freed

Unadilla Food Pantry Benefit Recital

October 8, 2023 was a special day for some of the professional members of the CGSUNY.



Matt Downey



Dennis Turechek



Ken Meyers



Harry George Pellegrin



William Simcoe



Giancarlo Sidoli

We presented a benefit concert/recital for the Unadilla Food Pantry—an organization that does great work and serves the less fortunate families of Unadilla and the surrounding area. This great organization was of particular importance to our past member George Lesh, who I am sure you will remember for his wit, charm and talent. We all loved George and find performing this benefit to also be a tribute to him as well as showing support for a worthwhile cause. We had a nice sized audience and they appreciated our efforts!

First up was our treasurer **Matt Downey** who performed three themes from the wonderful Japanese anime *My Neighbor Totoro*. Matt brings a delightful joy to these melodies and I personally love hearing him play.

Up next was **Dennis Turechek**, past president and founder of the CGSUNY. He has been enthralled with *The Great American Songbook* and performed a medley of two songs—*Like Someone In Love* by Jimmy Van Heusen and *Emily* by Johnny Mandell. As always, sensitive and lovely interpretations!

Ken Meyers followed Dennis and gave us a delightful reading of Bach's Largo (from violin sonata BWV 205.) Some folks play Bach very mechanically. Ken allows the music to speak—not over-romantic, but with passion. He followed this with Villa-Lobos' Preludes five, three and two delivered with the emotion you would expect from a Brazilian 20th Century composer—perfect!

I followed Ken—a tough act to follow! I played two simpler pieces by Dutch guitarist Jan Akkerman, then my *Elaine, Vals Brevis One*, and premiered (sort of) my *Vals Brevis 18 (Albert's Waltz)*, which is dedicated to Dennis Turechek. My shoulder/hand/tendon didn't act up too badly and my performance went over well.

Giancarlo Sidoli played next, giving us his arrangement of the Scottish folk song *O Waly Waly*, which was absolutely beautiful. He also gave us his wonderful arrangement of *Time After Time*, the Cyndi Lauper tune from the 1980's. It is very hard to arrange a popular tune for solo guitar—he did this magnificently.

Bill Simcoe rounded out and closed our program. He too took us to South America gracing us with pieces by Baden Powell and Jose Luis Merlin. These framed two pieces by Manuel Ponce—two jewels that are always a delight to hear.

In summation, we delivered a nice afternoon of music and helped raise some funds for a wonderful and necessary charity. Thanks to everyone!

—Harry G. Pellegrin

Emily and the Dragonfly

This is a long but worthwhile story that began many years ago, 2006 to be precise. Well, 2002 to be more precise. You see, Emily Elizabeth was born in 2002 on October 8th, the pre-anniversary date of our Unadilla Food Pantry Benefit. Emily only made it to 2006 on this Earth, passing away in that year. Needless to say, she left a huge hole in the lives of her family and, especially in regard to this story, to her grandparents.

Eric Marczak met Emily's Grandpa at a trade show where guitar builders and wood suppliers meet. Eric was looking for interesting back & sides sets and spotted some rather dark and lovely Indian Rosewood at a particular vendor's table. Transactions made, the two men exchanged business cards. The wood dealer clouded over when he saw Eric's card. Eric's logo is a dragonfly. The vendor explained to Eric about his wonderful grand daughter who even at the tender age of four had loved to sing and had a particular love for dragonflies.

Now the dragonfly is a very important aspect of Native American culture. Dragonflies spiritually represent swiftness and activity. To the Lakota people, they represent the spirit of God. In Japanese culture, the dragonfly is considered a positive symbol of courage, happiness, and rebirth. The spiritual message it brings is to seize the day, be grateful for what you have, and take that all-important leap of faith when you feel the calling to do so.

After Eric had left the wood to age and dry for a number of years, he finally got around to splitting it for book matching, he was astounded when he saw the pattern the grain made. Look at the back of the guitar below. Do you see the dragonfly? He knew this wood had to be made into a special guitar! I will not go into details, but this guitar came along at a specific and pivotal moment in both Eric's as well as my life. I played Emily—the name Eric gave this guitar—at a soiree at Fred Hellwitz' house and couldn't put her down. I saw my wife Elaine and Eric speaking in the corner. I asked Eric about the guitar later on and he told me it was already sold. I was crestfallen. But he then told me Elaine had bought it. And that's a long story as well.

Emily's grandmother has implored me over the years to help Emily to sing. I endeavor to do this, and have written many a piece of music with Emily on my lap. I promised Shirley, Emily's grandma, I would play Emily at the Unadilla benefit. After I had sent a video of Emily and me to Shirley, she told me that it was particularly appropriate that Emily had sung that afternoon as it would have been her 21st birthday. I feel like I got to dance with Emily on her 'coming of age' birthday!

For the past fifty years I have always wanted to do something with music that made a difference to somebody. My life wouldn't be complete without knowing I'd done some good. I finally feel I have that closure. Elaine and I could have wept that evening—from peace and through happiness.

—Harry G. Pellegrin



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.

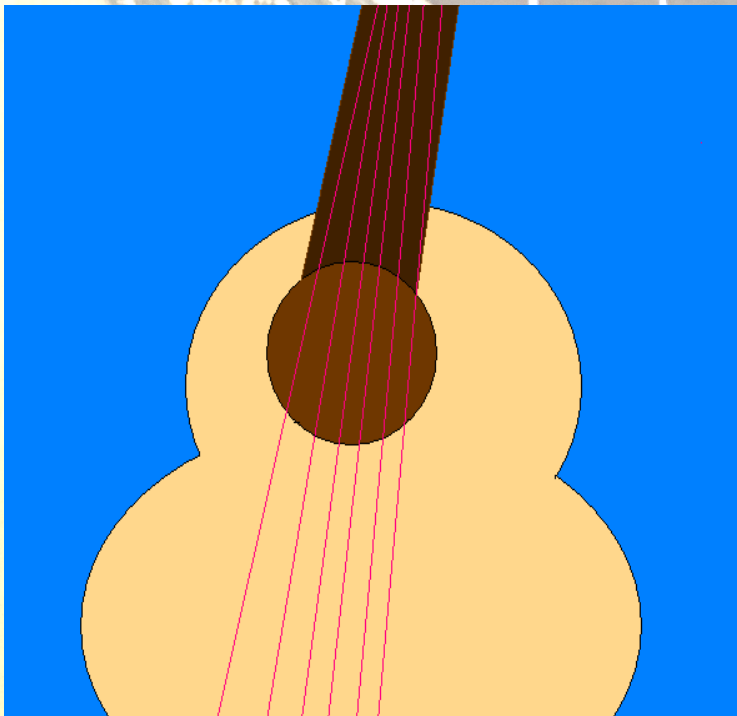
Any questions can be directed to current Secretary, William Simcoe, via email:

wsimcoe@gmail.com

The Question for next quarter's issue:

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

All members feel free to respond!



It's a Question of Propriety

As a non-playing spectator, I have attended quite a few concerts. I have observed many things while attending these concerts—and learned quite a bit: maybe if one studied music in any capacity one should be expected to learn, or at least absorb through exposure, the general doctrine of etiquette for concert attendees.

I would like to make the following suggestions to those attending concerts or recitals—formal or informal—which should definitely be adhered to at all events and possibly more so for informal soirees, as those performing might not be “professionals” and are more than likely feeling nervous. Even professional can feel a bit nervous when heading out onto the stage.

The attendee should be seated and remain so while a musician is playing; if one must get up and leave, one should do so in between program selections during the applause, unless there is a health crisis—requiring EMT's!

Opening and closing doors, either having them squeak or letting them bang shut, is very disruptive to the performer as well as members of the audience. Pushing by people or walking in front of others—especially walking directly in front of the stage or riser—is also extremely distracting. Dropping, knocking, or kicking things draws attention to the audience member and directs it away from the person performing.

Whether the concert is free or had a hefty ticket price, the musician playing deserves to have all attention on them. The audience should be allowed to enjoy the music without disturbing interruptions. Kudos to all performers who must deal with the unruly concert-goer.

—***Elaine Pellegrin***

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See you next quarter in
the Spring Issue of

Fret Wire

Have some news?

Have an idea for an article?

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

**Consider submitting it for
possible inclusion in**

Fret Wire
**your Society's
quarterly newsletter!**