

CGSUNY Newsletter

Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York www.cgsuny.org

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President's Message By Fred Hellwitz, CGSUNY

CGSUNY Society Members,

I'm proud to be writing my first official communication to you, my fellow members, as the new president of our Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York. This letter may be a bit longer than future addresses. I'd like to tell you a little about myself and share with you some of the visions I have for the future of our Society.

I salute Dennis Turechek and Bruce Walker as well as the past and present board of directors for developing our society into what it's become and, in particular, for creating and maintaining the level of quality of our Fall Festivals - I have big shoes to fill!

First a little about me: Although I grew up in Buffalo, I came to Albany from St. Petersburg, Florida in 1995 with my wife Laura, and daughters, Ariel and Sierra (4 and 2 years old at the time) in order to attend Albany Medical College. This was a change of career for me. I had been a professional classical guitarist for about 10 years, having earned a Masters of Fine Arts degree in Music Performance at SUNY Buffalo. I performed and taught locally at Ruth Eckard Hall in Clearwater, and St. Petersburg where we lived and I had private students. I would perform regularly in Florida and New York, and even performed in Chicago and England. While living in the Tampa Bay area I met many great "local" players and guitar celebrities including John King, Richard and Mary Long (Richard just received a well-deserved "Lifetime Achievement Award" from the GFA this past summer), Mark and Linda Switzer, John Paris, Steve Robinson and Tom Coffey. I also got to meet some great players at parties at Richard and Mary's home in Tampa. Among them were Jose Merlin (it was Richard who first published *Suite del Recuerdos* back in the late '80s), Ricardo Cobo, other GFA winners and of course Pepe Romero, a good friend of Richard and John's, as well as guitar maker Augie LoPrinzi. **(Cont.)**

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In the service of brevity, suffice to say that with a young family I needed a more secure career and after 2 years of pre-med in Tampa we said goodbye to the beautiful beaches, alligators, gopher tortoises, dolphins, tourists, classic sunsets, overpowering summer heat and stifling traffic and moved back to the Northeast.

One evening the summer of '95 I was practicing out on my front porch, prior to beginning med school (I wasn't to pick up my guitar regularly for the next ten years), and I heard someone say from the sidewalk below, "Nice Third Lute Suite."! Now who, on a residential street in Albany, would know that?! It turned out that Bill Simcoe was my neighbor across the street! It was Bill who introduced me to the CGSUNY and I have been a participant and/or attendee of nearly all the Fall Festivals ever since. After becoming an attending radiologist I was finally able to begin to pick up the guitar again with enough regularity that I was able to start performing again. Let me tell you, I was more than a little fearful that after such a long absence I would only be frustrated with my level of playing, especially after having performed recitals regularly before having changed careers. I wasn't sure I could handle that heartbreak. But I'm happy to say that I think that a relatively solid foundation in my "early" development served me well (I started studying classical guitar at the age of 22).

As president I hope to continue to build on the solid foundation that Bruce and Dennis have laid before me.

Here is my vision: I would like to see the CGSUNY become a household name in the various established musical communities of the Capital District, Oneonta, Binghamton, as well as any other community that represents our membership. We do have something to offer! How many small community-based arts organizations can boast an annual festival with the success we have achieved? Take a bow! The creativity, sense of mutual respect and artistic support that I've experienced among our membership is nothing short of inspiring. So, how do we do that? Well, I don't know! But I do have a lot of ideas and I've heard from a number of you, and well, I may be a poor judge, or maybe I'm just an optimist, but I haven't heard a *bad* idea yet!

So what am I going to do? Well, first I'm going to ask for your help. I'm already indebted to Dennis for his assistance, and the board members are right there with me. I know that even with the concerted effort of our board, that in order to provide you all, my fellow CGSUNY members, with expanded opportunities to play, learn, teach, go to and present workshops, hear great players *while staying financially solvent*, we can't do it without you. Yes, I'm quite confident that we can accomplish financial stability but even if we make no attempts to expand upon what our society has to offer, and we continue on the current course, *we would not remain solvent (financially stable)* as an organization. We have to make a concerted effort to improve this aspect of our society first.

If you were to call me right now and ask, "What can I do to help?" I'm not sure that I would have an answer right away, but I *would* tell you to "hold that thought" because I sure hope that these ideas start to become concrete action before too long.

So, first things first - increasing our membership base. Of course as we increase our visibility our membership will also increase. I believe we can start working on that right now. How can we make it easier for folks to become a member? Well, I think if we can hook up a way to join online, that would be a big help! That's going to be one of my priorities after getting next year's Fall Festival solidified (web site, see below).

It has been suggested that we could increase our membership dues. Well, that's certainly a possibility and I think as we expand what we have to offer we may be able to do that. We might even have tiered membership levels, but I know that even a few dollars on a fixed budget, or a student budget can be a hardship and I don't want to go there yet. If you feel that *you can* afford to make a donation above the regular dues, by all means! How about if all of you teachers "insist" that your students or students' families become members? After all, the cost for a student membership is only \$15, less than the cost of a single lesson!"

This begs the question, 'What's in it for them?'

Well, **this newsletter** for one thing, and I can tell you that under George's direction and a little help from others we're going to try and expand this as well - concert and CD reviews, local and regional guitar/music news, a calendar of events: How cool will that be to have a mailing list of folks who are known classical guitar aficionados who you'd like to notify about your event? How about a source for your local guitar, or other music news? How about news from/about regional/local guitar makers? Where to get your guitar repaired? How to care for it? What kind of strings for what kind of playing? Where's a good source of sheet music: in local shops, ordering on-line, or just plain 'ol (new-fangled?) free web sites? Who in our area is available for gigs? Who's looking for an ensemble partner in their area? And that's just the newsletter!

The CGSUNY web site: a lot of that stuff above can be included in an expanded web site including caching prior articles in a organized fashion (CD reviews, Concert Review, Guitar care/etc Info, Events Calendar, etc), CGSUNY Merchandise for sale (including Members' CDs), classifieds, etc etc etc!!! Picture it!

CGSUNY-sponsored events of touring musicians, local players performing, giving workshops about performing or practicing; how to understand Brazilian Dance Rhythms; Renaissance vs. Baroque ornamentation in lute music; how to put together a tour; master classes; and on and on! And this is just off the top of my head! I'm sure many of you have topics you love to see discussed or would like to share with others.

Education: We're already in the process of coordinating with some of the high schools to have our college student members offer presentations to their students.

So there you have it. Just skimming the surface on how I think we can continue along the path that our founders have so skillfully fashioned, and build upon that foundation to continue to promote the classical guitar.

Keep practicing, playing, and listening to the Classical Guitar!
Regards,
Fred Hellwitz

The following articles, artfully written by Don Witter Jr., are the first in a series of articles that will review the events at the recent CGSUNY Fall Festival. Others in the series will follow in future editions. The first is written to honor Dennis Turechek, a master teacher, consummate musician and a wonderful person who has been a guiding force for CGSUNY and an inspiration to us all.

My Dear Teacher and Musical Father
By Don Witter, Jr.

As Dennis Turechek steps down as President of the Classical Guitar Society, I must share with you the Giant human being you have had in your company for all of these years!

I am so sorry that I was not on stage to shout to the highest hills how important Dennis has been to me in my life! He was my first Classical Guitar teacher! I started lessons with Dennis at the Henry Street Music School in the lower east side. When I was told where to go by the director, I headed to the lesson rooms and heard this absolutely beautiful Guitar sound coming from the direction of my assigned room. As I approached, I said to myself "NO! THAT CAN'T BE MY TEACHER!" (Or can it?). Yes indeed. Dennis was playing HABANERA by the great Spanish Guitarist, Teacher, Composer Eduardo Sainz de la MAZA! I immediately said "I've gotta learn that one first!" From there, I remained a student of his for several years.

Dennis established an immediate and fruitful relationship with me always knowing just how much to push me towards my best playing. At his apartment off of the 20's and 7th avenue in Manhattan, he held soirees for his students which was an exceptionally perfect way in which he cajoled the student to play for each other in a very relaxed environment with food and conversation. I miss those great sessions. It was so nurturing and loving of him to do this. We all patted each other on the back and we grew as performers. I still remember this young kid by the name of Greg Bogart who was a young six-string gunslinger who took no prisoners. He had to go to the bathroom and psyche himself before playing and it worked! I expected him to be a top Guitar gun in the future but that never happened!

Anyway, getting back to the story of Dennis, I was astounded by the fact that he was a member of a couple of groups. He played Guitar in an early music group, a Jazz ensemble and a Contemporary Music Group along with his teaching and solo concerts. When he could, he would let me have a gig or two when he was spread too thin. He did all he could to help me grow as a well-rounded musician and it really worked. He never pushed me too hard or kicked my butt. He was always so kind. If I lost interest in a piece we were working on, he would back off and say, "Let's try something else". At one point Dennis knew I was ready for a more stern approach and introduced me to the great Spanish Virtuoso and legendary teacher ALBERT VALDES-BLAIN. Dennis studied with Albert and knew he was just what I needed so he arranged for me to "Audition" with the great Master. It was well known that Blain was the strictest teacher around and you only went to him if you were serious material. He lived in an apartment building on 12 or 13th street off 6th avenue and I remember that day as if it were yesterday. I rode the elevator to the 4th floor (I think) and from the 3rd floor in the elevator I could hear the sound of the Great Hermann Hauser Guitar he owned. That magical sound was unmistakable!

As we got down to the audition, he had me play pieces that would show what I could with both the right and left hand as he walked around the room and then sat down and told me that I played very well and was quite musical and that he would accept me as a student. He also let me know of the rules of being his student. Under only deadly circumstances would I be allowed to miss a lesson! He then told me to start working on the 1st 10 Sor Etudes- Segovia Edition and the first 5 of the Segovia Scales! Man that was a GIANT LOAD on my plate! I had 3 girlfriends at that time and had a date with each one of them. I had to tell them that at least for this first week I had to practice my butt off for my lesson! Man was I busting my butt to get ready for my lesson!

As I look back at my experience, that push made me a much better player and I immediately saw the results! Actually, I was scared that I would not get my act together. Again Dennis knew that I needed this push. THANKS DENNY! Another big push from Dennis was for me to have an exceptional instrument to play on and he told me to seek out a great master builder who was not charging too much for his great instruments. FRED T. DICKENS made me two incredible instruments. The first I still have but I could not afford to buy the second instrument as I had several bills that had to be paid and I told him he should get it to someone who could purchase it. I look back and regret what I passed up. I remember that from the first note on that killer Guitar, it shot down my spine it was so fantastic.

Dennis Turechek has had a tremendous effect on my life as my mentor and musical father. I love this man with all of my heart and hope that he remains a part of the world as long as I'm alive because I could not think of this world without him in it! I know that all of you Upstate feel the same about this truly special human being. Over this last decade as I have attended 8 out of the last 10 Festivals, I have heard and experienced this ongoing Master teacher/ student relationship continue and know that all of you Turechek students are reaping the rewards of being his students! You lucky kids!!!! DEAR DENNIS- MAY YOU LIVE UNTIL AT LEAST 100 years young! I cannot put into words what you have meant to me in my lifetime. I can only say that I am so proud to be your MUSICAL SON and am so proud that your loving spirit has been a part of my life! THANK YOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART !!!!!

*Reports From The 2010 CGSUNY Fall Festival:
Notes From the Collegiate Honors Recital – Part 1
By Don Witter Jr.*

The Collegiate Honors Recital features performances by outstanding students from colleges throughout New York State. This article is the first in a series and reflects on the performances by students from Mannes School of Music. We hope to include other articles and photos from the Honors Recital in the next edition.

Super Guitar Virtuoso YEN LEE

One of the finest moments in this 10th Guitar Festival was the appearance of The South Korean Female Virtuoso YEN LEE! Her regal appearance on the platform tells the tale even before her first note is sounded. Her tone is exquisite and her artistry is solidly grounded. She has it all: fluid technique, Beautiful tone, exceptional phrasing and wonderful depth of artistry! She played some standard fare in the Sor Variations on a theme of Mozart and a Movement from the Brazilian Suite of Heitor Villa-Lobos. It was a stunning performance. I, in particular, enjoyed the too often played Mozart Variations as her deep artistry gave each variation its' just due and the pace taken to string the variations together, was brilliantly handled! I caught the regality of this young woman in the hallway as she and her male companion walked to a practice room for warm up. She had a vivaciousness to her that was totally refreshing and from that first measure of e minor chords in the introduction of the Sor Variations, we all knew that we were going to experience something brilliant and special. I was tearing my heart out because there were so few audience members to hear this great young artist. I also was lucky to have lunch with her and the other special Honors students who played as they waited for the bus back to New York. After warming up to this report, I decided to visit the web and see if I could find more information on this young woman and found that she was the former head of the Botticelli Guitar Quartet.

You will find a solo performance by Yen Lee on YOUTUBE featuring another Villa-Lobos composition from the same Suite and one with her in the Guitar Quartet. I have not been able to find additional information but hope that will be corrected in the near future because this young lady is excellent. She is presently working with the great Michael Newman as a Master of Music Student at The Mannes College of Music. I must also mention that the fabulous Virtuoso Guitar Duo and heads of the Classical Guitar Department at The Mannes College of Music, Michael Newman and Laura Oltman who drove all the way up to support their students YEN LEE, PIERRE FERREYRA-MANSILLA and VICTOR MAIN! WHAT INCREDIBLE SUPPORT!!!

Fabulous Guitar Duo
Pierre Ferreyra-Mansilla
Victor Main

Two more Mannes students, Pierre Ferreyra-Mansilla and Victor Main closed the "COLLEGIATE HONORS RECITAL" and what a totally outrageously spectacular end to an exceptionally satisfying afternoon of music making. These two young virtuosos packed an awesome musical punch as their superlative tone, articulation, artistry and supremely virtuosic playing left us in a state of hunger for more!! They chose one of the great trademark works of the legendary Guitar Duo PRESTI and LAGOYA - the three movement Sonata Canonica, Op. 196 by the great Italian Composer MARIO CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO. What a totally exceptional performance this work was given! WOW! As if YEN LEE wasn't exhilarating enough, this duo was totally STUNNING! WHEW WHAT AN OLYMPIAN FEAT! The Duo of PIERRE FERREYRA-MANSILLA and VICTOR MAIN are destined to become household names. THEY ARE THAT GREAT! Thanks guys for sharing your great talents!

Lectures & Demonstrations Overview
By Don Witter Jr.

The first presenter for the Saturday morning session was Eugenio Rios. Eugenio continues to shine both as a Guitarist / Teacher and a truly magnificent scholar of the music of his Great Guitar Land - BRAZIL. His excellent lecture presented to us, the history of the Guitar in Brazil and what a superlative job he did. He begged our forgiveness in having to talk and then play but I saw no reason for that because the lecture was excellent from beginning to end. This young man has established the highest realm of performance and over the 10 years of the festival, he has been instrumental in attracting some of the greats of Brazilian Guitar to the Society. I believe that EUGENIO should author a DVD on The History of the Brazilian Guitar. It would be extremely well received. It was a wonderful presentation loaded with so much information!

Next on the lecture podium was another excellent lecture entitled "NON SEGOVIA SCALES" by MARK PAWKETT. Mark is an Adjunct Lecturer at SUNY Oneonta in Applied Music, Electric Bass, Fundamentals of Guitar, Rock Combo and Theory for Guitar. Mark is also the author of "The Pawkettian Reference Guide for the Versatile Guitarist." He gave a most useful lecture on learning the Guitar quickly and efficiently. He handed out a 6-page overview that if used coincidentally, would have you mastering the fretboard and many basic theoretical and practical aspects of playing the guitar. I have been investigating the basics especially concentrating and every possible way of playing all the scales and the standard Segovian scales leave a tremendous hole in the many ways you can get around the fingerboard. This lecture was supremely helpful in many ways and I hugely applaud this young man's perfectly prepared lecture. There were no wasted words in this baby and I may cover this in depth the next newsletter issue.

Both of the above lectures were dense and perfectly executed. It was a great shame that there were so few audience members on hand because if you were there, you were given great keys to the world of the BRAZILIAN GUITAR and BASIC GUITAR that would make you a GUITAR MONSTER!!! I don't know if those who took copies of the handout used it or stacked it out to collect it but I have been feasting on the 6 pages of Marks' handout and it is dynamite!! THANKS MARK AND EUGENIO FOR YOUR GREAT LECTURES!

From The Editor

Some New Things of Note For Our Members

- *This is the first emailed edition of the CGSUNY Newsletter. It marks a departure from traditional mailings. It will be sent by email to our membership and will subsequently be available in PDF form on our website.*
- *Among the articles that will appear in the February edition are continued reviews from the events at the 2010 Fall Festival, and updates on preparations for the 2011 Fall Festival. We also hope to include photos from the 2010 Fall Festival events in the next edition.*
- *There are many topics our newsletter could present that might generate a lot of interest among our membership. Fred certainly mentioned some of them in his President's Message. Others might include how to use practice time more efficiently, solo and ensemble repertoire for guitarists of all levels, upcoming guitar events in your area and how to amplify a classical guitar effectively to name a few more. Consider writing an article on one of these topics or on one of your own choosing. So..... send those articles along and we'll try to include them coming months. The deadline for submissions for the next edition is January 30, 2011.*
- *When you submit articles, it is helpful if you use Microsoft Word. If you don't use Word, it is also helpful if you send your article as a Rich Text Format or PDF. Pictures can be sent as JPEG files. Musical examples such as excerpts from a score can be sent as Finale files (I have the 2008 version). I can also work with them as PICT, or TIFF files.*
- *Fred and Laura Hellwitz continue to host a monthly "Guitar Soiree" in Albany at their Pine Hills neighborhood home every month. This month's get together was held Sunday, January 9th. This informal gathering is open to players of all levels of ability and, in fact, students and beginners are encouraged to attend. They say that they also like "listeners" too! Email fhellwitz@msn.com if you'd like more information. Please put "Guitar Soiree" in the subject.*
- *The CGSUNY is organizing a Performance Afternoon to be held at a local Albany coffee house for some Sunday in March. If you have an interest in performing, or you simply would like to find out more about this event, email Fred at fhellwitz@msn.com and put "Performance Afternoon" in the subject.*
- *Look for reports on these ongoing events as well as information about other upcoming events in next month's newsletter.*
- *That's it for now, we'll see you next month*