



C.G.S.U.N.Y. NEWSLETTER

VOL. I NO.1

FEBRUARY 2002

President's Message

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Classical Guitar Society of Upstate NY.'s first newsletter.

About two years ago, Dennis Turechek, my mentor had mentioned that his finest wish was to see a Society for the upstate community. He said he felt there was a need, and it wasn't being served... His dream has been realized, and our "small group" has expanded to over 40 paid members, with a geographical area which covers Ithaca to Albany, Binghamton, and south to Sullivan County and growing.

We are looking ahead to a very busy season this year. We have benefit performances to do to help raise funds for some of our projects, we will have the Second Annual Fall Festival, we hope to begin workshops in multiple locations this season, and there will be performances at various local and regional locations to help promote the classical guitar.

Currently we are busy seeking grants and funding from private foundations and benefactors to help us put on some of the events we would like to do during the year. If anyone is interested in helping with this project please contact us as soon as possible.

**Join with us and help
make this the most active
CG society in New York
State**

Gail Hamilton-

ALL ABOARD

Well, the good ship CGSUNY has finally been launched. This was made possible because of a truly dedicated crew of hard working mates who rolled up their sleeves and went to work selflessly and tirelessly on this worthy project. There are too many to name, both locally and from afar, who have made important contributions, but the current Board of Directors certainly deserve mention.

Our **President**, Gail Hamilton, who has maintained a steady and even hand at the helm and has logged in countless hours seeking and sorting out articles of incorporation, bylaw language, as well as presiding over monthly meetings.

Vice-president- Bruce Walker who dispenses common sense in large doses when we get off course. He builds fine classical guitars when he is not busy with society business.

Secretary – Carolyn Rifenbark who performed minor miracles in helping us get ready for our guitar festival last October with design and production of posters, brochures, programs, with never a discouraging word. She has also been a mastermind at getting all the paperwork set up and organized with regards to the corporation forms, records, etc. A special Thank You for all your efforts.

Treasurer, Jim Adams, our resident guitar repairman, who watches over the cash flow and whose enthusiasm for guitar knows no bounds.

(continued)

Board Director- Bill Simcoe, who hails from the Albany area, and is our liaison with our Albany area members, is very energetic and is a valuable resource of ideas. He loves to perform on the guitar and has participated in virtually every fund-raising event the CGSUNY has presented.

Board Director- Townsend Plant, represents the Ithaca area where he is Director of Music Admissions at Ithaca College. Besides being a fine concert performer and teacher of the classical guitar, he has valuable fund-raising skills and experience and is a wonderful asset to our society.

HISTORY BYTES

We have accomplished much in the first year and a half of our existence. There have been radio appearances in Albany and Binghamton. We appeared on television in Syracuse where the Ensemble made it's first performance debut. We performed at the Albany First Night Activities with soloists, and ensemble performances. There have also been many other local and some not so local venues with live performances. And, of course, our First Annual October Guitar Festival, which highlighted a day of

performances at the Wilbur Mansion in Oneonta, capped with an evening concert by the GFA winner last year, Martha Masters. A masterclass by Martha ensued the following day and a final concert by Ms. Masters was performed in Albany the following day.

Our festival attracted folks from as far away as NYC, and reinforced our belief that we are fulfilling a need in the entire upstate area. We still have much work to do. I believe we have tapped in to an undercurrent of nostalgia for the fine and subtle values of the classical guitar in Upstate New York. Our job is to cultivate and nurture this potential, helping it to grow and develop into an educated and enthusiastic following which will support this most beautiful of instruments and spread the love for the classical guitar far and wide.

Submitted by:

Dennis Turechek

Board Director- Dennis Turechek, is our motivating force. It was his kernel of a dream which sparked the onset of our Society. Dennis is a fine guitarist and teacher of classical

guitar who represents the Oneonta area. He brings experience in corporate matters, and is instrumental in initiating the CGSUNY Ensemble which is comprised of professionals, amateurs, & students of all ages and experience. Dennis is our main source for music, meeting places, etc.

Guitar Tips

Guitars & Humidity

by

Bruce Walker- Luthier

Well, this is our first newsletter and here I am harping (no puns here) on guitars and humidity again. It will not be the last time. Short of using your ax as a tennis racquet or a boat oar, **NOTHING HAS MORE POTENTIAL TO RUIN YOUR INSTRUMENT!**

WET GUITARS

I try to keep my shop at a fairly stable atmospheric condition of 70 degrees and 50% relative humidity. This represents a fairly median environment. Most instrument manufacturers also keep their factories in that general range. If the relative humidity in your environment deviates much more than 10 % either way, you probably should begin thinking about counter measures.

Relative humidity is nothing more than the % of moisture the surrounding atmosphere contains relative to the maximum it could hold. As an example, if the surrounding air at 75 degrees could hold a maximum of 10 grains of water per measure of volume, and it only actually contained 5 grains, it would be said to have 50 % relative humidity. As the temperature of air increases, the amount of moisture it can hold also increases. Thus, as air is heated, if the amount of moisture remains constant, the relative humidity decreases.

As the relative humidity increases, your guitar will absorb additional water and begin to expand. Symptoms of this expansion are:

- The back and top will begin to bulge and you may notice a more pronounced depression in the area of the butt and heel blocks where the back and top were glued down.
- Any inlays will become distinct in their demarcation from the wood. The wood expands while the inlay material (usually shell) doesn't.
- Glued joints will become more visible on the top and back. A major problem may be an increase in the height of the action, making the instrument more difficult to play.
- The finish on your instrument will not stop moisture from

entering the wood; it only slows it down. With long exposure to increased humidity, the finish will become distorted. This appears as ridges, which correspond to grain lines. On the back and sides it may appear that the finish is sinking into the pores. As the wood expands the pores enlarge but the material filling them remains stable: The same may appear on the neck.

- Finally, the sound quality may be degraded.

More serious effects of prolonged exposure to high humidity may be loose braces, bridges, or fingerboards. The obvious remedy for these problems is to lower the humidity in the instrument's environment. Keep it in a warmer room, etc. Remove it from its case for a time and leave the case open to try to dry it out as well. The case can often cause moisture to accumulate due to its seal.

Don't automatically assume your instrument's environment is dry just because it's winter, **MONITOR IT!**

DRY GUITARS

A more serious condition is the low humidity usually found during winter months. Damage caused by low relative humidity is usually

much more serious than that caused by high humidity. Pay close attention to your instrument and it will tell you when dry conditions are affecting it.

- One symptom is the contour of the back and top. They can become more flat or even concave.

- The finish can distort due to the wood beneath it shrinking. Wood will pull away from inlays.

- Frets can become loose and pop up when the fingerboard shrinks.

- Glue seams in the top and back can open.

- The worst problem** associated with dryness is cracking, usually in the top, but it can also happen on the back or sides. Repairs of such problems are costly!

- A common winter time problem caused by dryness is buzzing caused by lowered action.

Avoidance of problems associated with dryness requires the use of a little common sense.

Keep the instrument away from heat sources.

Keep the guitar in its case; and use a humidifier. When using a humidifier, check it often (every few hours) to make sure it has plenty of water. Use a hygrometer to keep track of the humidity so you will know the situation. If possible keep one in the case with your instrument and another one in the room you store the instrument in. These are a cheap

insurance when compared to the cost of repairs.

I hope this information will assist you in caring for your instrument and enjoying years of its use. Use little common sense, observation, and loving care and your guitar will last you a lifetime.

In the News....

"Norwich Guitar School debuts in August"

by
Tom Rasely

New York State guitarists, reserve the dates of August 9-11, and be ready to take your guitars to Norwich, NY for the first annual Norwich Guitar School, presented by the Chenango County Council of the Arts.

This is a 3-day hands-on seminar, where guitarist 16 or older with at least one year playing experience will be encouraged to learn and help others learn. 5 classes, 6 special presentations, and 2 concerts are planned within schedule that runs Friday, Aug.9 from 9 am - 9:30 p.m.; Saturday Aug. 10 from 10 am. - 9:30 p.m., and Sunday Aug. 11 from 10 a.m - 1 p.m. Class times will present a variety of techniques and styles designed

to stretch the musical vocabulary of the participating students.

Special sessions will focus on topics as varied as microphone technique on stage and in the studio, booking and promotion, antique fretted instruments, and guitar care and maintenance. Every session will include time for Q & A. Plus there will be an "open mic" concert featuring any interested students on the Friday evening, and a concert featuring the three faculty guitarists on Saturday. See our website for registration and tuition costs.

Guitar faculty includes Dennis Turechek, a seasoned guitarist with 45 years of playing experience. Dennis plays classical-flavored jazz, teaches classical guitar at SUCO at Oneonta, as well as Hartwick College. He performs as a soloist and with The Bridge- an improvisational jazz trio. Also on staff is Chris Woodard from Ithaca, a 32 year veteran guitarist who spent some time working in and around Nashville. Chris has performed and recorded as a soloist, and as half of the Celtimorphosis duo. Chris brings his teaching experience from classrooms and private

lessons. Third, is NGS director Tom Rasely, during his 37 years of playing, Tom has toured 25 states, and has been guest artist with several central New York symphony orchestras, and at the White House. Tom's discography includes over 24 recordings as a feature artist.

Other special presenters will include: Charlie Romano from Crazy Horse Music on guitar care, Dan Lovett from The Loft Audio Recording Studio on microphone technique, and Sal Salvaggio from Cooperstown on lute.

The concept of the Norwich Guitar School is unique: nothing like it exists in the northeast. The goal is to draw players from all across New York State, as well as northern Pennsylvania. Up to 70 students can be accommodated at the Arts Council facility, which features full-size classrooms, and a 500 seat auditorium - a professional sound tech will be on-site for the entire 3 days. Overnight accommodations are available, and catered box lunches are included in the tuition for both Friday and Saturday.

For full details, visit the NGS website at www.ascent.net/rasely/ngs.htm You can access an application form through the web site, or by e-mail (rasely@ascent.net) or by calling 607-334-4682.

My Bruce Walker Guitar

by
Bill Simcoe

I first came to the Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York meetings in November 2000, after seeing Gail Hamilton's listing on an internet newsgroup. The Capital District Classical Guitar Society became inactive after 1999, and I was looking for ways to connect with other classical guitarists in a reasonable driving distance from Albany. I was surprised to see Townsend Plant at the meeting (Townsend was from the Albany area also). I met Bruce Walker and heard about his offer to build guitars for cost of materials plus a \$500.00 donation to the society. I was intrigued, but didn't consider myself in the market for a guitar although I'd been trying lots of guitars at festivals. My plan was to go to Granada in 2002 with an empty guitar case, try every guitar and fly back with one - a 50th birthday present to myself. My wife wanted to visit Spain, so it seemed like a good plan. Time went on, and I had some opportunities to perform with and for CGSUNY, and Townsend and I worked on some duets and planned an Albany area recital. My Dauphin guitar developed a little buzz and I mentioned it to

Bruce and he thought he could check it out and fix it before the recital - and it could get to Albany when Gail came up to see the LA Guitar Quartet. Not only did Bruce offer to repair the Dauphin, but Gail offered to lend me her Bruce Walker classical guitar to practice on in the interim.

Practicing on Gail's guitar, I found it to be very powerful and substantial and rich in tone, I like it very much. Bruce made a new saddle for the Dauphin, which helped stop the buzzing, although the Dauphin still needs some TLC. Bruce studied the Dauphin and how it was braced - he was amazed at the sound it has for an inexpensive factory guitar. It has an unusual bracing, which may have contributed to both a wonderful sound and to the two large cracks it developed. The bracing is perpendicular to the grain of the top, with a bass bar.

Townsend and I performed our recital May 7, 2001 and afterward I e-mailed Bruce that I was interested in his offer for building a guitar. We discussed that it should be a cedar top, Indian rosewood back and sides, and a standard scale length. I told Bruce I was looking for more volume,

but a sweet and open tone like the Dauphin. Bruce gave me the cost of materials, and I sent off a check. I got an email of a photo of a pile of wood- this is your new guitar!

I went off to the Stetson International Guitar Workshop in June 2001, and tried all the great guitars there. I really admired two- one by Greg Byers, the other by Manuel Valesquez. The Greg Byers was cedar top, with a very big volume. Bruce asked me what guitar builders I liked and I said Ruck, Byers, and Valesquez. I also checked out what finishes were on the finest guitars- and they all had french polish, at least on the top.

Bruce kept me up to date with photos as work progressed, and asked how I wanted the details - rosette, tuners, finish, saddle- some details that I hadn't really ever thought about- I'd have to look at my guitar to even realize what he meant. I just took them for granted. You can see some construction phase photos on my website www.williamsimcoe.com The construction of the body came quickly- the long part was the finishing. I made two trips down to East Branch during the construction, once with my Father, and once by myself. Once Bruce took careful measurements of the Dauphin's neck and we discussed some details of the saddle. The second time I tried

out the guitar before Bruce started the finishing process. I enjoyed a leisurely trip down route 10 each time and realized what a beautiful area it is down in Delaware County.

I worked on a recording all through 2001, including recording sessions in March, June, July and August. I kept Bruce updated with copies of my sessions, and he said my guitar learned the pieces ahead of time.

I took possession of my Walker guitar on September 4 at a CGSUNY meeting, and used it to practice with the ensemble. It sounded incredible from the first day! I first performed using it September 22 at a Cabaret for Monday Musical Club of Albany. Bruce provided two saddles with the guitar. The first one was quite high, which worked very well to prevent buzzing (I sometimes play with a lot of force), but it was strenuous for the left hand. The lower saddle was not high enough to prevent buzzes. Bruce made a third saddle as a temporary measure. He wanted to let me play the instrument for several months and then make final adjustments to the nut and saddle and check all the frets.

On October 13, I performed at the First Oneonta Guitar Fall Festival using my Bruce Walker guitar. The guitar got a great review from Don Witter, a wonderful player

from Brooklyn who was up for the day. He posted the review on a guitar internet newsgroup. Martha Masters, our featured performer of the festival, admired the guitar and later contacted Bruce to commission a guitar for herself. Another good review there!

Now I have a great new guitar, and a great friend in Bruce Walker. The new guitar has been a boost to my practicing and performing. It's good to have two guitars in case one needs to go to the shop for adjustments. Bruce took the guitar back after three months and made the adjustments and refinished the top. He worked around my performance schedule and so I've used my Bruce Walker guitar for all my performing since September 4.

Thank you Bruce.

Bill Simcoe



UPCOMING EVENTS

Antigoni Goni Recital

at

Skidmore College, Filene Recital Hall

Thursday, March 7

8 p.m. \$5.00 admission

Masterclass the following day at 10

a.m.

contact Joel Brown

518-580-5324

TRITONIS Trio

at

Vorheesville Public Library

Sunday March 10 at 2 p.m.

CGSUNY SHOWCASE

at

Caffe Lena

Saratoga

Sunday March 10 from 3-5 p.m.

Performances include solos, duos, trios, and ensemble by members of the Society.

contact www.caffelena.com

or call 607-865-8775

for more information

Corr/Simcoe & Nielson Concert

at

RPI C + CC

Friday May 17 at 8 p.m.

tickets \$10.00

contact 518-489-1508

On the Drawing Board

Jose Merlin Concert in April
stay tuned for details.