



# C. G. S. U. N. Y. Newsletter

VOL. II NO. 1

November/December 2003

## President's Message

**WHEW!!!** Well, this was a breakout Fall Festival if ever I saw one. We more than quadrupled our ticket sales, gave away a beautiful hand made Bruce Walker guitar and spread the news that the CGSUNY is not going away. That we will be here for awhile fostering good will and spreading love for the guitar was good news for the several hundred people who attended the events of October 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>.

For those who missed Dennis Koster, I am truly sorry. Those who had not heard Dennis Koster before had their jaws dropping throughout the concert. He remains a thoughtful classical and passionate flamenco guitar player. His masterclass the following day was equally inspiring with down-to-earth practical advice tempered with some truly profound philosophical insights.

There are so many people to thank for the overall success of this event. We had fourteen live unique performances at the Wilber Mansion. All the following performed at the day event: Greg Koenig, Gail Hamilton, Christine Liggio, Tom Rasely, William Simcoe, John Ferrara, Chris Gotzen-Berg, Don Miller with the ad hoc guitar ensemble, Albert

Muir, Frank Galante, Nikita Grigoriev, Lorena Guillen (soprano), Dave Raphaelson, Sal Salvaggio, Dave Richman and "From the Bridge" (Dennis Turechek on guitar, John Davey on double bass and Amy Merrill on viola).

Thanks to all the guitarists who performed without remuneration. The entire festival is being reviewed by Don Witter from NYC and will be submitted to the Guitar Review for publication in the near future. The Guitar Review is the most prestigious guitar publication on the planet. You can get advance installments of Don Witter's review at: [classicalguitarlist@yahoogroups.com](mailto:classicalguitarlist@yahoogroups.com).

Special kudos to the people on the board of directors, who for the past year have done all the work which makes events such as the Fall Festival become reality. Thanks to Bruce Walker who served as president this past year—a year in which our website was realized and further progress toward our tax-exempt status was achieved. Bruce could easily have been reelected president this year but unselfishly chose to accept nomination for treasurer in order to get our fiscal house in better order. I personally want to thank him for coming up with the idea of the guitar giveaway as an incentive for

ticket sales and for delivering up a beautiful classical guitar for that purpose; an ingenious idea and a masterful guitar. Bravo!!

Thanks to Christine Liggio who has heroically wrestled with the numbers as treasurer this past year. She is serving this year on the board of directors to work primarily on fundraising issues.

A special thank you to Carolyn Rifembark who, as secretary, routinely solves enormous problems ranging from publishing the minutes of each meeting to production of brochures, posters, programs, etc., to paperwork pertaining to our legal status as a nonprofit entity. Carolyn may be the one indispensable person on the board.

Thanks also to Gail Hamilton, serving again as vice president. Gail was our very first president when CGSUNY was getting started.

The board of directors includes Jim Adams, Christine Liggio, Bill Simcoe (Albany), and newly elected directors Valerie Tressler (our Binghamton area connection) and Sal Salvaggio. Congratulations to all!

Now that we have barely had time to catch our breath, we must begin planning events for the coming

year. We invite everyone to join us, as any growing enterprise needs the input of many people with many talents. We can use help in many areas such as advertising, fundraising, educational programs and the like, so please contact us with ideas, suggestions, contacts, etc., and help us grow.

Dennis Turechek

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Our new website is up and running. Check it out at [www.cgsuny.org](http://www.cgsuny.org)

Any members who wish may submit a short bio and picture for inclusion on the "Members" page. Also, any CD's or events anyone has to advertise on the site may be forwarded for inclusion on the site.

**Reminder that Membership Dues are now due for the 2004 season. Please contact us for membership form.**

## Ensemble Anyone?

We would like to invite all interested members to contact us regarding the CGSUNY Ensemble.

We would like to set up a regular practice session for ensemble players. There are a number of upcoming events that need ensemble performances.

First practice of the Ensemble will be Thursday Jan.8 at 7 p.m. at SUCO Oneonta. We will set up a regular practice schedule at this meeting.

For more information contact:

Gail Hamilton 607-865-8775 or email: [musicalm@hancock.net](mailto:musicalm@hancock.net)

## News Brief



**The Norwich Guitar School**, a project of the Chenango County Council of the Arts, completed its successful second year this past August. NGS is an annual three day, hands-on seminar for guitarists 15 years old and up. Players at all playing levels and styles are invited to participate, and we recommend at least six months of playing experience. No previous lessons are required; just a love for the guitar.

This year we were very lucky to have a new teacher, Cathy Horner, added to the faculty. Cathy is a world-class fingerstyle guitarist, and she specializes in ragtime and blues, performing original instrumental and vocal music. Shortly after the school ran, Cathy was featured in *Guitar Player Magazine* as the Unsigned Artist of the Month. Tom Rasely (NGS Director and CGSUNY member), Chris Woodard, and CGSUNY President Dennis Turechek were back again to share their professional expertise. To top off the weekend NGS presented a concert by renowned jazz guitarist Steve Brown from the Ithaca College faculty.

The Norwich Guitar School always tries to offer a wide variety of instruction, with classes throughout the weekend, a half dozen special topic seminars, concerts, jam sessions, and a lot of good networking, and is supported in part by the D'Addario Foundation and Ibanez Guitars, as well as WSKG Public Broadcasting. This year's school attracted players from all over the Northeast.

Plans are already being set for next year's school, which will once again feature Dennis Turechek. NGS offers a challenging and educational experience in the relaxed environment of the Chenango County Council facility that features a lovely 500-seat auditorium.

Registrations are being accepted for the '04 school, and are limited to the first 50 applicants. Registration can be submitted on line at [www.norwichguitarschool.com](http://www.norwichguitarschool.com).

Submitted by:  
Tom Rasely, director of the  
Norwich Guitar School



## While Traveling

### Rosewood Guitar Shop Seattle, Washington



While visiting Seattle on other business last November, I stopped by Rosewood Guitar on Greenwood Avenue to visit, see and try some guitars, and buy some music. My friend Dan Corr, a Seattle native had recommended a visit. I was greeted by Jason, who was keeping the shop, and I looked around, I was immediately interested in the Rodriguez guitars.

Jason said that the older Rodriguez (1964) was actually part of the owner's collection and not for sale, but he could play a little bit on it so I could check it out.

The guitar had a beautiful clear sound, very open. For comparison he played a 2002 guitar by Greg Byers. The Byers was very loud and powerful. Jason let me try the Byers- it was a pleasure to play- very easy to make a loud sound. He then let me play the Rodriguez for comparison. The treble strings were so beautifully open and sweet!

We talked for a while and Jason played a Manuel Valesquez- with a damaged top. The finish was damaged and the top gouged, but the sound was very wonderful!

Jason played pieces by Cardoso, Bach, and Barrios and highlighted the qualities of each guitar.

Finally, I asked him about his guitar, and he brought out a Sergio Abreu. It was a gorgeous instrument, and it had a big, solid sound, very lush! Jason said they were getting several Abreu guitars each year and they sold quickly. It was a great comparison of guitars all in one sitting, and it was a pleasure to listen to Jason's playing.

I stopped to check out their sheet music selection and found two things I was interested in: Celso Machado's "Musiques Populaires Bresiliennes" for flute and guitar, and "Cinq Hommages Francais" by Arnaud Dumond.

Rosewood had a very nice collection of guitars in all price ranges from student to professional. The professional level guitars included a Gilbert, a Traphagen, a Fernandez, an Oribe, a Kohno, several Ramirez, and guitars by Oxrieder and Hernandez. They also had a nice selection of CD's. Thanks to Jason for a very educational and friendly visit.

Bill Simcoe



## On the Road ... A lute odyssey

by Sal Salvaggio



...I just finished a run of solo performances that began at the Stamford Performing Arts Center and ended at the Mary Curtis Branch of the Settlement School in Philadelphia, interspersed with partial and full programs here and there around Upstate New York. It is something I have wanted to do for a long time.

It all started last January when I got a call from the Philadelphia Classical Guitar Society to do a recital the following October. After the usual contractual lingo I agreed to do the performance. After I hung the phone up I said to myself " Well Sal, I guess you gotta start practicing for this one". So I proceeded to assemble a program to play. I got three suites for baroque guitar as well as assorted works by daMilano, Dowland and others for lute out on the music stand. I started to engage my mind and fingers in a daily routine of scales, trills, arpeggios and the music - a departure from my normal - "let's read through some obscure Italian lute manuscript facsimile tonight and play some Dowland" mode. I also decided to set up a string of performances "down and up and

down the East Coast" to get ready for this engagement. The first gig was in May at the Performing Arts Center in Stamford, NY, a lovely little place with nice acoustics. The program went well and helped me determine what did and what did not work in performance.

Then I booked the National Art Show in Cooperstown in July. It is a completely different venue - on the porch of the Cooperstown Public Library. I rigged up a little amplification system and played for the art enthusiasts.

The wine bar was to my left, so after two hours I found myself adding long improvised versions of Sanz's "Canarios" and an off-the-cuff version of the Folias de Espana to the program. It's amazing what the "nectar of the gods" can do for the creative process!!!

The next performances featured two baroque suites in Binghamton and then my lute set in Cooperstown at the Smithy and in the "park" for CGSUNY in August. That was interesting because the Baseball Hall of Fame is there and the crowd walking past looked like a busy day at Disneyland. I must have played for 3,000 people!

The next day my wife and I were off to Atlanta to perform at The Listening Room at Dreamcatcher Guitars. A nice little space, they had some great acts booked for the season, from classical guitar to jazz guitar. Flatpicking master Beppe Gambetta played there a few weeks after I did.

At this point in the sojourn I had played the program a lot and needed to recoup my thoughts

about the music I was playing. My usual mode of operations is to learn a program, play it, then learn another, play it, etc.... Other people run the same program for a year or more, so I figured I needed to find a way to keep myself somewhat interested in what I was playing. It's a psychological thing - maybe change a fingering or trill here or there, rearrange the tunes, all of which I experimented with.

My school job started in September so I had to get into the choral director/chairman mind set. This was an easy thing to do. I had lunch duty the first quarter and this helped take my mind off the 5 hours of practice I needed to do every night. I missed my students over the summer but they helped to encourage my performance endeavors. It's great to have such supportive students.

At the end of the first week of school I headed up to Cafe Lena in Saratoga, NY, with master guitarist Tom Rasely. We performed at a CGSUNY fundraiser there.

Two weeks later I played my program and did a masterclass for the Long Island Classical Guitar Society at the Great Hall at C. W. Post College. The hall as is part of a Tudor mansion that was imported in pieces to the college by Marjorie Post, founder of the University. The hall is all oak on the inside and had a very warm ambience.

The next stop was a lute performance at the CGSUNY Fall Festival Oct. 4<sup>th</sup>, (a lot of guitarists staring at your hands). Well at this point I had definitely put my fingers and brain through the "meat grinder" and felt I was ready to play for the Philadelphia Society Oct. 12th. I got there about 1/2

hour before the gig, tried out a few chairs, tuned the lute and baroque guitar and set out to play my last run of the program. The auditorium had fantastic acoustics. The crowd was rather large and most of the attendees were guitarists from the Philly area. Half way through the second suite (Campion D major) I got the vibe that I had engaged in a dialogue with my instrument and the listeners. I like to talk with the audience and halfway through an introduction of one of my pieces a drum and bugle corp decided to march past the window of the auditorium, so I played a little "Villianos" to their beat until they passed out of hearing range. Tore the place up. The second half went very well and I came out for two encores.

After the concert my wife, my daughter and her boyfriend and I checked out the Liberty Bell and then went up to 2nd. Street and got some Philly cheese steaks for dinner; "A cultural must" an acquaintance advised. Then to my kids place at Penn State Medical College, a few glasses of wine, some sleep and a Columbus Day Voyage back to Oneonta. I have to say that it was a great experience playing for so many people at so many locations over the last few months, and getting some of this little known music out and about. I guess I look at it as a "chapter" of my life. Now I think I'll stay put for a while, learn some new music, take the dust off my 13-course lute, play some Weiss and think about the next odyssey. Maybe next year, or the year after...

**November 5, 2003.**

## The Luthier's Corner

### INTONATION

(Some Semi-Random Thoughts)  
by Bruce Walker

First, a quick review of just what all this commotion is about. The guitar's bridge is situated on the top so that the 12<sup>th</sup> fret is at the scale's midpoint. Therefore, the pitch at the 12<sup>th</sup> fret is one octave higher than the open string. Fret positions are calculated from the nut using a standard formula. (If you really want to know the formula, contact me and I'll provide it). The theoretical position of the saddle is twice the distance as from the nut to the 12<sup>th</sup> fret.

Because the act of fretting a string causes its pitch to go sharp, there needs to be some "compensation" figured into the equation. The amount a given string will go sharp depends upon the material of which it is made, it's mass, the action height, the scale length and its open pitch. To compensate for this sharpening, the saddle and bridge are moved away from the nut during construction of the instrument. In other words, the distance from the 12<sup>th</sup> fret to the saddle is slightly greater than the distance from the 12<sup>th</sup> fret to the nut.

Further, because the strings react to fretting differently, the saddle is normally slanted slightly so that the bass strings are longer than the treble. (The bass strings have more mass than the treble strings.) Additionally, the break point of the strings over the saddle can be tuned so that the length of each individual string is adjusted to compensate for the sharpening when fretted.

Now we come to the really controversial part of this story: **Compensation at the nut!** Right up front, let me state that *I don't buy it!* I have studied every pro argument that I can find for compensation of the nut, and remain unconvinced. I would love to hear any reasonable argument and certainly have an open mind.

One such argument states that there are two segments of the "fretting stretch" which causes the string to sharpen. The first segment is from the open string position down until the fretted string actually touches the fret. The second segment is the additional fretting pressure exerted by the player to press the string on down until it comes in contact with the fingerboard. The argument continues that the first segment is properly compensated at the saddle, but the second segment is more properly compensated for at the nut!

Another argument for compensation at the nut theorizes that by compensating for the sharpening of pitch due to stretching the strings when fretting, the open string is being compensated for a stretching that does not occur. Therefore, the proper compensation for this is to move the nut from its theoretical position. In other words, shave the end of the fretboard in order to move the nut closer to the saddle!

There are many other arguments about how to properly intonate a guitar. Currently, there is even a patented system being sold worldwide that claims to be the only way to correctly address the subject. It seems to me that such endeavors have much to do with marketing and little to do with really improving the performance of the instrument over traditional methods of compensation. Many

luthiers have built wonderful guitars for centuries that were well compensated and sound great. Traditional methods of intonation work well if the bridge and saddle are correctly situated and the frets are correctly placed. Very often I have found bridges out of position; less often I have found frets incorrectly placed. Oddly enough, these maladies seem to occur more often on hand built instruments than on factory built ones.

Your instrument must be compensated for the strings you prefer to use, the action height you prefer, and even your technique. When properly done you will have wonderful results. When it sounds good to you and your audience, it must be good!

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## An Open Letter to The Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York

I would like to thank the Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York for the opportunity I recently had to learn guitar building. Especially, thanks to Mr. Bruce Walker for his patience and expertise in teaching me this wonderful art.

I met Bruce last January and told him I had heard he was a guitar builder and asked him if he would teach me. He told me about the Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York, of which he was president at the time. He also told me the Society had a scholarship available to sponsor a student and that he would teach the class. I applied for the scholarship and, in late January began the Luthier course. For three nights a week

until the first of September, I met with Bruce in his shop and began learning a craft I had wanted to learn since my teen years.

Bruce is an excellent guitar builder and a superb instructor. I feel very lucky to have had someone like him, with his years of experience and knowledge, as my instructor. When Bruce builds a guitar, it is not from a kit. He builds every piece from scratch, which is the way I wanted to learn. His teaching methods made this an enjoyable experience.

On the first of September, I completed the class and my first guitar, with which I am very pleased. I look forward to many years of guitar building thanks to Bruce Walker and the Classical Guitar Society.

I would also like to say that my wife, Dawn, and I attended several musical events sponsored by the Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York this past year. We enjoyed the events very much—especially the recent concert with Dennis Koster. We look forward to many more events in the future.

Thank you again to the Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York, and a very special thanks to Bruce Walker.

Sincerely,  
Douglas A. Norwood, Jr.



## Fall Festival 2003 A Review



**The 3rd Annual Classical Guitar Fall Festival** was a real treat and I am glad I was there to enjoy a weekend surrounded by people who deeply respect and share their love of the Classical/Flamenco/ Folk/Jazz Guitar.

Arriving a day before in order to ease into the weekend, I spent a little time at the local music store "The Guitar Clinic" run by Jim Adams who is a society member, and I had a front face example why this society is as successful as they are! Jim bent over backwards for a young man who only had a certain amount he could spend on a new guitar and had not much left for a case. Jim then gave his assistant instructions to modify the bill so the young man could get a decent case thrown in. This type of kindness and humane treatment of people is what makes me take that long bus up from New York City to just be around people with beautiful hearts who, like me, enjoy plucking away on this great instrument of the soul!

The actual day of the festival, Saturday October the 4th had mother nature weeping a steady load of rain but that didn't dampen the spirits or resolve of the main people busily performing their assignments. Yesterday at the store, Jim Adams told me he will

be there at 8:30 to open the building and lo and behold as I strode up at 8:25 he was already running around the porch as Society President Bruce Walker was busy hanging up the Banners. I love being there in the beginning of great things, and after greeting both of these beautiful people, I entered to see my 1st guitar teacher and superman of the guitar in this neck of the woods-Dennis Turechek setting up the bagels, scones and coffee for the early morning start as Secretary and one of the founders of the Society Carolyn Rifembark, sat behind the table preparing the tags and taking the money for the weekend's events.

### FESTIVAL DAY EVENTS:



Festival day is a cornucopia of tasty ear candy of all descriptions centering upon the sound of the Classical Guitar. Promptly at 9:30 we had **Greg Koenig** open the festival with a very nice array of Classical Guitar compositions, all of which I knew. It was a very inventive mix of lovely pieces. Each performer is given 1/2 hour and there is a ten-minute transition period, which works out just right and keeps the event moving along at a clean and crisp pace.

At 10am we had a lovely duo combination of **Gail Hamilton and Christine Liggio**, both board members of the society, give us a really sweet idea of what a duo

should sound like. I must also relay that Gail had all types of tough luck getting to the site-A FLAT TIRE - and she had the programs for the day but like the champion she is, everything was taken care of and she was able to come in just in time and settle down to a crisp and neat performance showing that she is a real pro in all areas! I must also mention that Christine Liggio has a wonderful tone production as I caught her warming up before concert time.

At 10:40 **Tom Rasely** gave us a truly inspiring 1/2 hour of fun and songs and cutting wit that had us feeling so good in spite of the rain outside! He even gave us a little treat/surprise as he pulled out a ukulele and played his heart out to the great pleasure of the audience. He was just what was needed as he lit smiles on all of our faces with his great selections and positive spirit!

Next came one of the excellent players in this neck of the woods- **William Simcoe** who also gave us a wonderful array of tasty goodies for our listening pleasure mixing Latin American, Baroque, 20th Century and Spanish repertoire.

At 11:50 **John Ferrara** dispatched a little conservative palette of Villa-Lobos, 3 Scarlatti Sonatas and a work heard earlier by our opening player-Op 45 Variations By Mauro Giuliani on "La Folia". We were given a great opportunity to hear two distinct ways of looking at the same piece which was a treat in itself.

We continued at 12:20 with a taste of what the evenings' concert would feature- Flamenco Guitar in the hands of a young man - **Chris Gotzen-Berg** who played a 1/2 hour of his own compositions including a sweet piece written for his wife when they first started dating. I was at this point ready to

jump through the window and take a swim and have a coffee as I am only human! Since the next 1/2 hour would be ensemble I thought why not take a lunch break and keep the recorder running but something told me that something was going to happen so I made my tired eyes and mind perk up and I was glad I did as a very unusual man entered our mists in the name of **Don Miller** who led the CGSUNY Ensemble from 1:00 - 1:30 to perhaps one of the greatest displays of working with an ensemble that I have ever witnessed! He showed the audience a series of extremely efficient ways in which to have an ensemble tune to each other and relax at playing difficult pieces together. His wife was on hand at the back for handouts and information on his way of teaching which to me was absolutely brilliant! WOW. I was super impressed by the spirit and joy in his teaching as he condensed so many efficient techniques in the limited time of the 1/2 hour!

Next at 1:30 came society member **Albert Muir** who gave us an array of small pieces which could have perhaps been dispatched with more clarity but what came through was a desire to pull through any difficulties and share a love of the instrument and its' music with others.

At 2:10 **Frank Galante** gave a nicely mixed program of Turina, Carulli, Frescobaldi, and Paulus. At 2:40 up came **Nikita Grigoriev** who gave one of the lightest 1/2 hours of the day of Romance, Bach and a couple of his own pieces one of which utilized the sweet voice of **Lorena Guillen**.

At 3:20 **Dave Raphaelson** took the stage and we were treated to an interesting series of pieces, some of which he called Flamencadelic"

to coincide with his 70s' upbringing and attraction to Flamenco Guitar music. He had an excellent command of the audience as he even gave us a little rest from the sound of the guitar by introducing us to the world of the Banjo by way of using the "Classical Style" playing of what is known as "Classic Fingertstyle, or Guitar Style Banjo". There is a site devoted to this little known style of Banjo playing on the net: [www.classicbanjo.com](http://www.classicbanjo.com). Well it was a very special turn of style to hear this style and Dave really turned on the audience to his fine artistry!

Talk about *FINE ARTISTRY*, at the 3:50 to 4:20 time slot we had a magnificent display of that dreamy and alluring plucked instrument the *LUTE!* In the hands of the Marvelous skills and spirit of **SAL SALVAGGIO**, we were treated to a very sweet trip into the past as SAL gave us a wonderful array of lovely compositions on a 10 course lute. I believe this was one of the crowning performances of the day. After the last concerts, a few of us had a nice little talk with Sal as he spoke about reading the Lute Tablature and how the job of the Lutenist was. It was quite a nice treat to have such an informal glimpse into the soft and sweet world of the Lute by one of its' finest exponents!

The 4:30 to 5pm slot gave us the "Serious Looking" attack of **Dave Richman** who performed the Lute Suite #4 of Bach and an arrangement by Jazz Guitarist Wes Montgomery of "I've Grown Accustom to her face. The compositions were performed on another Walker guitar, which as usual was another great concert instrument. The sound that Dave made was akin to the sound of the previous Lute in that he had very

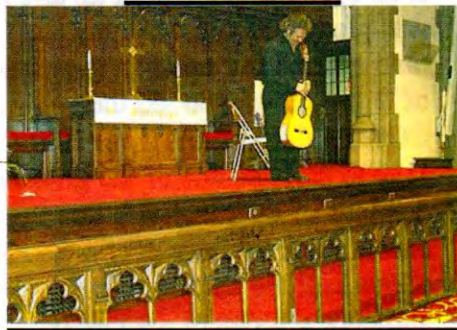
short fingernails and his articulation position was between the area of the bridge and edge of the sound hole. He had some small hiccups in some of the movements but recovered nicely from each. His tempos were all moderately taken.

Our last performance was a **Jazz Trio** of my former teacher Dennis Turechek Classical Guitar, with Amy Merrill on Viola, and John Davey on double bass! What a great trio and Dennis did some absolutely great playing. The sound of the trio is one of EQUALITY. You never got the feeling that someone was way out in front leading the trio. All three artists were totally in command of their instruments and the music. They played "Sister Sadie" and followed that with a composition of the Bass Player entitled "Wall Street Suite" which gave us a great mixture of the audio side of the hustle and bustle of wall street as there were scrapes and slides on strings and hits and knocks on the various bodies of the three instruments! It was a great release of energy and a really fun piece to watch them execute! Lots of great musical ideas in this piece! I loved it! Then came a change of pace entitled "Piazza Victoria" which featured the lush playing of the Violist Amy Merrill! The Trio Known as "FROM THE BRIDGE" finished their lively and buoyant 1/2 hour with another John Davey original called "The Squeeze" which had all the verve and class of a Stephan Grappelli/Django Reinhardt utterance! This Trio has such a great and beautiful sound together. You really have to hear them. They have a recording available entitled "9 VIEWS FROM THE BRIDGE". They sent the crowd off into their dinners

with large smiles on the outside and the inside!

## Evening Main Event

### DENNIS KOSTER IN CONCERT!



We had a chance to attend one of the most perfectly executed and musically satisfying concerts in decades as Classical and Flamenco Guitar virtuoso Dennis Koster stunned and warmed the crowd with his absolute mastery of both genres. His commanding stage presence and astute explanations of the compositions made us want to sit and hear him all night.

Attired in all black, Dennis entered, made one moderately paced bow to the huge crowd and then dove straight into a continuous rasgueado that opened the "Farruca" in the Style of Nino Ricardo. Dennis performed on a Classical Guitar and Flamenco Guitar built for him by the brilliant young Luthier Aaron Green of Boston. The Flamenco model had the traditional wooden peg heads and Dennis said it was the best Flamenco Guitar he has ever played in his life! I will tell you that both instruments were really great because Dennis was able to do everything on both instruments! Dennis Koster's program was a truly phenomenal event that should have been preserved on video as an excellent example of all the pieces needed to present a perfect concert:

content, programming, execution, lovely tone, superb notes and anecdotes and the winning spirit and verve of a truly committed artist to his/her craft! All of the above was in copious amounts and I was so honored to be in the audience of such a special event. Dennis and I go way back into the early days of the New York Classical Guitar scene of the early 70's and he was always an outstanding and bold mover and shaker on the Classical/Flamenco Guitar scene. Dennis got the reputation of being a "Bold Programmer" because of doing things like a transcription of a Bartok Solo Violin Sonata, which was way ahead of its time. Way before that phenom from Japan Kazuhito Yamashita transcribed the "Pictures at an Exhibition". Now we have a few outstanding transcriptions of huge size in front of us but I believe the kudos for this must fall to Dennis Koster as he really went into the belly of the beast decades ago and came out with bold statements about what could be accomplished with 6 strings on a wooden box!!!

The program was a mixture of Classically transcribed music, original Flamenco music composed by Koster and in between these two worlds of differing sounds we had the 3 movement Sonata for Guitarra (1988) by Samuel Zyman who teaches composition at The Juilliard School. As one of the great anecdotes shared with us, Dennis told us that he has been a friend of Samuels' since 1987 and "Bullied him" into writing for the guitar. He mentioned that Samuel is a very soft spoken person, almost on the timid side and was up against an artist who loved what the composer was creating and wanted him to extend his special



composing ability to the Classical Guitar and this was the first result. I believe Dennis mentioned that he had not played this piece in something like 8 years and was so excited to be able to perform it again. The Sonata itself had several themes, polyrhythms and key changes to keep the player and audience working hard. This was a very tough composition to share with the audience and it was also an incredibly powerful Sonata. Of course, Dennis was up to the task milking and unfolding every musical event in this enormous piece with every drip of his great musical sweat!

**At intermission The Upstate Classical Guitar Society President Bruce Walker held the drawing for one of his instruments!**



Every ticket bought for the concert was entered in the drawing. I had a chance to try it out during the day and it was a beauty as all the guitars by Bruce Walker have been! Easy to play and the guitar mirrors the character of the person playing.



**Dennis Koster** did a nice little display job by playing a Prelude of Villa-Lobos on the soon to be raffled off guitar which was won

by **David Lynch**



who told us that just the day before he had a conversation with a friend about the drawing and told her that if he won he would give it to her! I think he will have to chew on his words since that guitar was shown to be a concert instrument of first rank! The maker Bruce Walker also let it be known that his efforts to support the Guitar Society extended to him making a concert guitar for anyone who would give the society \$1000 dollars and just pay for the materials needed to build the guitar! What a leading example of a passionate person dedicated to the complete support of his societies development! Before sharing with you some of the great playing in the 2nd half, I must let you know about the passionate plea offered from the stage by Dennis Koster as he told the crowd about how honored he was to be the main performer of the festival and how he very truly admired the "grass roots effort" put forth by the society. He pleaded to the audience to become a member of the society. Dennis also pointed out how the arts in general are being eliminated at such an incredible rate in this country and how we must band together to stop this terrible thing from continuing!

(Dennis also made this plea at the New York Classical Guitar Society a month or so ago).

The 2nd half of the concert was started with a couple of lovely transcriptions of piano music of Johannes Brahms from the Intermezzos Op. 117 no 2 and 118 no 2. I've heard these transcribed by my friend in Germany Hubert Kappel many years ago and these really fit so nicely on the guitar and were given a beautifully moving performance. Dennis informed the crowd that he didn't want to start off with the programmed Largo e Mesto from the Piano Sonata No 7, Op.10 No 3 of Beethoven because it was such a somber piece so he played that after the Brahms and you knew why as you heard how incredibly dense the grieving was in this painful second movement. The only negative occurrence all night was during this great performance of his very, very deep and moving transcription. A cell phone rang disturbing the incredible atmosphere Dennis worked so hard to build during the phrases of this piece! I wanted to hang the intruder from the highest post in the church! I will not name the offender but it was a person who should have known better!! After killing the mystical and magical aura built by Dennis momentarily, he climbed back on that noble performance horse he rode all evening and shared the rest of the piece in all its' dark and moving tinges. This was one of the finest performances of a Classical piano piece played on the guitar I've heard in my life! (I heard Ben Verdery wave his magic wand over a lovely composition by Mozart several months ago and was stunned by that also!!).In order to play such moving pieces without the advantage of "88 keys", you

have got to have an incredible instrument in order to supply all the nuance and subtleties required and Dennis' great instrument by Aaron Green delivered the goods in spades! The concert was ended on his Aaron Green traditionally pegged Flamenco model as he performed a tribute composition entitled "Homenaje a Carmen Amaya" a Bulerias he composed trying to capture the essence of this most famous figure in Flamenco Dance. All evening we were treated to the highest realms of musicianship and clean playing all with the purpose of exposing these gems of composition in the most positive light. Dennis was sent off to his dressing room with a thunderous standing ovation. There was a young lady in back of me who stated that this was her first real Classical Guitar concert and she was at a lost for words to describe the evening's performance!

If you are not yet a member of the society, Please take a moment and contact us to join with us... See contact info on last page of this newsletter.

## MASTERCLASS DAY



Sundays' masterclass started a little late as we all went out for a great night of late dinner food and conversation and Dennis headed over afterwards to the house of former guitar student Sal Salvaggio who treated the guests with some more great lute playing. I was too worn out to go to Sals but was a little annoyed at myself as I ignored my alarm and wound up running to arrive at the masterclass just before they began at 10:30. Dennis had a great idea in order to lessen any early morning nerves by the performers by having them play one after another as though this was a concert situation and then each in turn were worked with. Dennis Koster is a brilliant teacher and used a tremendous body of stored knowledge and apt anecdotes to get all of his points across. There were four students for Dennis and one was actually a present student of Dennis studying Flamenco and playing his most recently studied piece. Dennis commended him for being able to play this most recent piece in this masterclass setting so well. There was another student who informed the gathering that he used Dennis' Flamenco Guitar method and he was mainly concerned in how to keep the specific "compas" alive in each piece. There were so many really fine points brought out by Dennis in so many ways!



Let me just throw out a few as I wrote them down: **"If you don't do it it won't get done"**- "Eyes are the windows of the soul-So is the guitar" - "The instrument is so flawed. You've got to take a leap of faith. You've got to let go" - **"Don't think-DO"** - Remember you want to SHARE music with someone"! There were so many more great statements and one of the finest of them all was how he shared with us that his Classical Guitar teacher in the 70s' was the great Julio Prol who said to Dennis on his debut night in 1975

**" HOW DARE YOU LOOK SO NERVOUS!IF IT MAKES YOU HAPPY TO BE FRIGHTENED THEN GO RIGHT AHEAD AND BE FRIGHTENED! BUT KEEP IT TO YOURSELF.YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO MAKE THE AUDIENCE NERVOUS!"**

This was a great word of advice to Dennis by his teacher who wanted him to understand the importance of not letting people experience anything but pleasure from his playing and presence on stage. Dennis also used that anecdote to relay to the audience how he used to attend many "debut concerts" and noticed how people would act as though they were in great pain

and this affected how he, as an audience member would experience this negative aspect of a performance and realized how important it was to have people be comfortable in the concert environment. "Performing is not about yourself. It is about the music"! Part of the masterclass was devoted to questions about flamenco technique: rasgueados and tremolos. One of the main differences between the Flamenco and Classical Player is the development of the extensor muscles of the hands. Classical playing deals so much with the flexor muscles (closing of the hands) instead of the extensor muscles (opening of the hands). Dennis also pointed up to us how the players now almost shun the use of a good apoyando (rest stroke). Also pointed out was the use of the wrist when performing rasgueados should be relaxed as though you were waving goodbye with the wrist! He also emphasized the use of slow practice! **"If you want to play fast, practice slowly!"**

Well that is my short glimpse into a wonderful two days in upstate New York at the 3rd annual Classical Guitar Fall Festival. It was another great success for this wonderful grass roots group of people who love the Classical Guitar and who promoted a truly noteworthy event.

I will be back next year to cover and participate as a performer and support them in any way I can throughout the year as they try to do it again! My hat goes off to all of the people who joined their noble efforts to bring such a special event to their neck of the woods and what an admirable job they did!!

Don Witter, Jr.

### **Please send us your Upcoming Events**

**We would like to help spread the word about guitar activities in our Areas.**

**Members, please contribute articles for upcoming newsletters.**

**We would like to know what you are doing.**

**Do you have any Information on the History of the guitar?**

**We would like to include a Teacher's Corner and would like our teachers to contribute some suggestions for students of various levels.**

**What would you like to see included in the newsletter?**

**Thank you for your input.**

**DEADLINE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER IS MARCH 1st, 2004**

**Please submit your information as soon as possible.**

**Submit newsletter info to:  
[musicalm@hancock.net](mailto:musicalm@hancock.net)**

**Or mail to:  
Gail Hamilton  
CGSUNY  
134 Delaware St.  
Walton, NY 13856**

## **Join With Us**

**Membership is only \$25.00 for the year.  
(students are \$15.00)**

**Show your support and help us make CGSUNY a strong guitar society**

**We are seeking Donors and/or Sponsors to help enable us to put on more events in various locations.**

**PLEASE HELP**

**Thank you in advance for your support. We can't make it without you.**

**Contact us:**

**[www.cgsuny.org](http://www.cgsuny.org)**

**or**

**Write to us at  
CGSUNY**

**134 Delaware St.  
Walton, NY 13856**

**We wish everyone  
A Happy and  
Healthy Holiday  
Season.**

**Next meeting**

**Monday Jan. 5, 2004**

**At**

**SUCO Oneonta**

**Fine Arts Bld. Rm 114**

**Directors meeting: 6 p.m.**

**General meeting: 7 p.m.**

**PLEASE COME TO THE MEETING.**