

Joy and Sorrow of Flamenco

Tomás Jiménez could never be described as light-hearted. Even when off-stage he appears in a profound sense to be serious, preoccupied, wrestling with existential questions which, as an exponent of flamenco, he has a special vocation to pose and answer in a particular idiom.

The answers are not always sad, and nor are the questions. Tomás brought with him two guitars, each with its own voice - one, which he described as 'lugubrious', particularly relating to the darker *canto jondo*; the other with a brighter, more *chico* tone for the *alegrías* and happier, more optimistic responses.

He is in fact the medium through which the spirit of flamenco, the *duende*, is transmitted - sometimes, like a blind seer, with eyes shut, he rocks gently in response to the plaintiveness of his own playing; sometimes he stiffens with matador pride in defiance of the life-torrent which flows through his hands turbulently and seemingly inescapably; sometimes he softens as the torrent relents to become a placid or even sparkling stream. He is equally open and responsive to all possibilities as a skilled and highly versatile exponent of his art.

It is now five years since Tomás Jiménez gave



Tomás Jiménez playing at the Club on 20th May

his first performance at the West Sussex Guitar Club; and in that time his appearance, presentation and more importantly his performance have all changed significantly, bearing witness to his own disciplined dedication to flamenco. The absence of a fixed programme on Saturday seemed to give his latest performance more fluidity as he felt his way into his own opening

Soleares, listening carefully to the resonance of the guitar and responding with the greatest sensitivity, almost oblivious to the audience. The fingers of his left hand fluttered with the delicacy of butterfly wings, spiralling, descending and rising again in musical ornamentation above the insistent demands of the right.

In his *Tientos*, the
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Fabulous Fabio

Fabio Zanon's recital on 4th March was exceptionally good value. Not only was I privileged in being able to attend his performance but the magic of his music coloured the whole of the following day, to such an extent that I could still hear his guitar whilst giving my lawn its first noisy mow of the season.

Fabio's beautifully balanced programme began with two familiar pieces, the *Adagio* from Beethoven's 'Moonlight' Sonata and a *Minuetto* by Schubert, both arranged for the guitar by Tarrega. Within seconds the largest audience so far seen at a club recital fell silent under the spell of the 'Moonlight' and the charm of the Schubert piece. It is all too easy to dismiss transcriptions of popular pieces but Fabio proved in words and music that, by careful selection, the guitarist's repertoire can be successfully extended in this way.

In his introduction to six Scarlatti Sonatas Fabio gave us a brief and amusing outline of Scarlatti's life and explained the Spanish and Portuguese musical influences found in these Sonatas. This added

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Fabulous Fabio...

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considerably to the pleasure experienced whilst listening to these brilliant and contrasting pieces, transcribed from the keyboard by Zanon himself. Perhaps the initial impact of the powerful second Sonata (K404) would have been better maintained with fewer repeats; however in the hands of such a master the guitar was capable of giving far more colour to these Sonatas than would have been possible on a harpsichord. I am sure that Scarlatti would have approved!

After the interval, Fabio performed Leo Brouwer's *El Decameron Negro* and I found myself enchanted by the second movement



Fabio Zanon

with its haunting echoes of sound. Three pieces ended the programme in a very satisfying fashion. *Sevilla* and

Pavane Caprichio by Albeniz and *Serenata Espagnola* by Marats were performed with great style and thoroughly deserved the enthusiastic and prolonged applause which they received.

Of course encores were demanded and graciously given by Fabio, who played *Estudio Brillante* by Tarrega and a final Scarlatti Sonata. It was a truly memorable performance and one can only marvel at Fabio's technical prowess, memory and, most of all, his ability to communicate the spirit behind each piece of music. We are very lucky to have Fabio as a friend of the Club and I, for one, am, already looking forward to his next visit.

Pam Davis

Tomas Jiminez Workshop

On the Sunday after Tomás' concert about a dozen of us attended his workshop, and very good value it turned out to be. My own reason for being there was that I had read that some of the right hand techniques used by Flamenco players are very beneficial for classical players. I am not particularly a Flamenco buff. In the event I came away more appreciative of the music and feeling I know a little more about it. It also confirmed the idea that some Flamenco techniques will develop the right hand in ways that classical technique does not.

It was a very enjoyable day. We divided into two groups on the basis of ability and experience and

each group worked separately with Tomás before we came together for the final session. Tomás was well organised, patient and clear with his in-

enemies by seeming to foster the idea that the music is a mystery which outsiders can never share. Tomás clearly doesn't think so and his teaching made

it all accessible. There was a good deal of talk of Tomás returning to do similar events for us. If you were there on the 21st, I feel sure you will want to come back. If you weren't, then whether you are a beginner or advanced, Flamenco or classical, I strongly recommend this enjoyable and useful day. I could add that the lunch was excellent, but for a more informed account of that,



Fergus Paton, Alex Iles, Steve Higgs and Mike Turner concentrate as Tomas demonstrates a point.

struction (even when he lapsed into Spanish!). Sometimes the Flamenco fraternity have been their own worst

contact Alex!

Geoff Lunn

The Regis School of Music Summer 2000 Festival, Our Guest is Julian Bream.

The year 2000 is being celebrated everywhere. We offer our contribution to the Millennium celebrations with the 3rd Annual Festival which is dedicated to English Music. The interest and support from the West Sussex Guitar Club members and many guitar enthusiasts enables us to enjoy the art of many excellent musicians. But the capacity of our hall and the not limitless resources of the Club would not allow us to invite such a world celebrated musician as Julian Bream. He is definitely one of the greatest contributors to the world culture of the guitar and lute. Every artist to whom I have spoken over the years cherished



Julian Bream

the idea of hearing Bream in concert. The amazing discography of lute and guitar music played by Bream is still growing. He is definitely one of the most inspiring artists of our time, if only judging by the great music which has been written and dedicated to him.

I realized that the format of the Festival and particularly the theme of it gave me a rare opportunity to approach Mr. Bream and invite him to give a recital. Having lost the hope that my letter had reached the artist, one day last August I opened an envelope with intricate and very

distinctive writing. It was letter from Mr. Bream who had heard about our Club and about our work at the School. He wrote that the dates of our Festival would be suitable for him and he would be happy to give a recital. One phrase in his letter was particularly significant. "I am an enthusiast of music and it just so happens that I play the guitar..."

On 24 June Julian Bream plays at Alexandra Theatre two Cello Suites by JS Bach, Variations by Respighi, the masterpiece dedicated to the artist by Benjamin Britten - "Nocturnal after John Dowland" and the Sonatina by Lennox Berkeley, also dedicated to Julian Bream. We are delighted that it was possible to include in our Festival this performance by Julian Bream.

A. Levrov

all many happy hours of listening and playing guitar music during the weeks of summer.

Pam Davis

Benslow Guitar Weekend

My search for a residential guitar course less demanding than West Dean Festival led to this one run by the Benslow Music Trust and aimed at up to grade V standard.

The course comprised the usual disciplines of technical exercises, ensemble and solo sessions capably and patiently directed by tutor Anthony Pigg. Our group of ten friendly guitarists, based in Benslow's fine recital hall, played through an intensive but manageable programme enjoyed by all.

Accommodation proved interesting rather than luxurious in the Trust's nineteenth century house, pleasantly situated in five acres of grounds. We shared facilities with a separate string players course running concurrently. Larger bedrooms doubled as practice rooms giving rise to the pleasant possibility of finding a string quartet happily sawing their way through Haydn on returning to the room to brush our teeth. It certainly gave added significance to the term 'chamber music'. Food was plentiful and dining arrangements convivial.

Unfortunately, only one classical guitar course is included in the programme among numerous other musical events in Benslow's year. Next course September 22-24, cost £101 to £121, Benslow Music Trust, Little Benslow Hills, Hitchin, Herts. SG4 9KB. Tel: 01462 459446.

Roger Rose

Library Notes

We approach the end of the seventh Guitar Club season with a very well stocked library, including fifty-eight CDs. Recent performers at club recitals, Fabio Zanon, Julian Byzantine, Eden and Stell, Shuko Shibata, Andrew Gough and Hezy Levy are all represented by recordings in our CD collection. Why not remember a happy occasion listening to their music by borrowing one of these recordings?

Perhaps you would prefer to improve your own guitar playing with a book from the 'Techniques' section of the library or to learn a new solo, ready for performance in the autumn, from the 'Solo' section! If you still possess a turntable there are some wonderful Flamenco records available, to add atmosphere to those warm summer evenings. Tomas Jimenez has not yet recorded a CD but we live in hope that this situation will soon be remedied.

The library system is easy to follow and if I am not available I am sure there will always be another member willing to help. I wish you

Jiménez Recital...

(Continued from page 1)
 roles differed. The strained, slightly flattened tone of the left hand interpreted the aching numbness of unfulfilled love above the uneven syncopations of the right. Familiar cadences of the genre became little more than points of reference as Tomás Jiménez searched ways in which to communicate adequately the frailty and vulnerability of human relationships. The audience became actively and attentively involved in this exploration - which was taken up again, after the lighter *Alegrias*, in the *Tarantas* from his own home-town of Cartagena - described by the artiste as being unstructured when compared with his first three items. The voice of the community predominated at the heart of the music, like a pool reflecting shade - and also, at times and very tentatively, light.

The folkloric *Colombianos*, with relatively uncomplex stanzas of joyful dance rhythms, showed the way in which South American music has become assimilated into flamenco - and so did the pre-interval *Wahida* from Cuba. It was, however, the more intense *Siguriyas* preceding it which seemed to transport the artiste away from the concert-hall into deep introspection. Here the dramatic spiritual and musical exploration centred on the reality of death. From the brokenness and

fragmentation of his chords, played with great clarity and exactitude, Tomás Jiménez sought a melody which finally emerged as a single unimpaired voice.

The second half of the programme opened with an evocative song from Granada, reflecting at one level the close interconnections between Andalusian and Moorish cultures which were

superficially sundered when the Arabs were finally driven back into North Africa. However, it was perhaps the certainty of an undisclosed and continuing relationship - a path which led back to the Arabs, as Tomás Jiménez reflected - that was more closely portrayed.

This Moorish theme was reflected in the three following programme items.

The juxtaposition of two versions of the *Alegrias* was of great interest as it helped the audience to see the versatility of the genre, and revealed more clearly the artiste's superb technical ability in realizing the stylistic differences between the two. The portrayal of happiness in Cadiz was fuller and more relaxed than the higher-pitched, more conservative and ornamented Cordovan version, which seemed to echo closely the nasal resonance of the *oudh*. The evocative *Zambra Mora* again bore witness to the significance of the Moorish influences in flamenco, and struck a delicate balance between a reflection of happiness and its shadowy counterpart.

The accomplished performance ended with the *Bulerias* and *Soleares*, the latter played with the incredible speed and adroitness for which Tomás Jiménez's performances are noted. The diminutive stage seemed crowded with the singers and dancers his much-applauded climax evoked.

For a flamenco player, the easiest path to success is one of commercialisation. Conversely, finding one's own authentic voice is a constant uphill struggle; but this is the journey that Tomás Jiménez has not been afraid to undertake, and his absorbing performance was an outcome of his total commitment.

Angela M. MacTavish

2000 Programme		
June	10	Recital by <i>Helen Sanderson</i> (guitar) & <i>Mark Wilde</i> (tenor)
	17	So'ton Classical Guitar Society— Recital by <i>Simon Dinnigan</i> at Chandlers Ford. Tickets & info phone Wayne on 01329 310792
	24	RSM Summer Festival—recital by <i>Julian Bream</i> at the Alexandra Theatre
July	1	Club Evening led by Linda Kelsall-Barnett & Mitch Callow
	22	Summer Party 'Viva Vivaldi'
September	9	Annual General Meeting
	30	Recital by <i>Simon Dinnigan</i>
October	14	Club Evening
November	4	Club Evening
	11/12	WSGC Guitar Festival
	25	Recital by <i>Stephen Marchionda</i>
December	16	Christmas Party

All events (except the Festival) take place on Saturdays at 7:30pm at the Regis School of Music, 46 Sudley Road, Bognor Regis. For details phone 01243 866462

