

Gothenburg Combo UK Premier



After two years from conception, we were very proud that the Gothenburg Combo chose to make their UK debut in Bognor Regis! They arose at 5:00am Saturday morning and flew to Heathrow to give a wonderful concert just for us. Regretfully, the audience was very low in numbers but made up for this with the

New Members

We extend a very warm welcome to the following new member:

Alison Elliott

from Chichester

Graham Hart

from Chichester

Peggy Carrott

from Bognor Regis

Helen, David, Charlie and

Annabel Phillips

from Yapton

Andrew Snudden

from Worthing

We hope you enjoy

 many happy evenings at

 the Club!

enthusiasm of an audience ten times the size. Although all our concerts are good, this one must rank as one of the best ever and it is a shame that so many members missed out on this. Not only was the music of the very best quality – totally together with superb dynamics and tone colours – the wonderful sense of humour and personalities of these performers (David Hansson and Thomas Hansy) shone through in their chat

describing the pieces. They really brought the audience into their music and we all loved it. Sheer entertainment of the very best. One member said afterwards that that was the best concert (of any description) they had ever been to.

The programme was so varied. In fact David quoted from Monty Python when he announced ‘*and now for something completely different*’ between each piece.

Some guitarists will say keep absolutely still when playing - concentrate all your energy into the

playing and do not waste any in unnecessary movement. The Combo however are very animated and constantly on the move – in fact dancing on their chairs – the music being so infectious that you just have to move to it. This infection was caught by the audience who were electrified by the experience.

The concert began with Manuel de Falla’s *Danza Espanola No. 1* arranged by Pujol. Surely this is the best guitar duet ever written and we were privileged to hear the absolute best performance ever. This would be a piece that most players would need to warm up to, but no, we had the most amazing display of fireworks and tone colours right from the very start.

This was then contrasted by the Duo’s arrangement of a 2000 year old Chinese piece *Zhi Zhou Diao (Melody of the Purple Bamboo)*. By invoking very fast vibrato and glissandos, the duo were able to recapture the oriental sound of the guitar’s distant ancestor the Eastern Pipa.

We then moved from China to Africa with a piece *Ceuta* composed by the Combo. This was inspired by a chance meeting with an African in Los Angeles Airport who was carrying a Kalimba – a thumb piano consisting of different length nails hammered into a piece of wood. A relative of the African was trying to get from Central Africa to

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The Gothenburg Combo arrive



Sami David and Thomas



Charlie Phillips meets the Duo



Jenny Craven with David & Thomas



Sightseeing at Arundel



The Duo Visit Slindon Pumpkin Farm

Gothenburg Combo ...

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Europe and got as far as Morocco where he was interned in a Refugee Camp. He was accidentally shot while trying to escape from the camp. The sound of the Kalimba was created by placing a sheet of paper between the guitar strings. The piece started with African music that would accompany travelogues depicting mud huts with straw roofs. The music changed as the refugee travelled north, eventually culminating in Arabic type music as he reached Morocco.

Our world journey then took us to Cuba for Eduardo Martins *Sones y Flores* a very exciting piece. We were then told how, seven years ago while in Bavaria, the duo were invited to the house of luthier Hermann Hauser III who had a wonderful collection of early guitars. This led to them making a CD called Hausmusik using period instruments. One of the recordings made was of the Dynamic Duo's unbelievable arrangement of Rossini's *Barber of Seville*. Afterwards, the audience were quite rightly stunned with such virtuoso playing. What treats await us in the second half?

Well, this started with something completely different again as we heard the Duo's arrangement of some of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* – needless to say played to perfection. We then travelled to Sweden for another Duo's arrangement this time of a traditional Swedish Folk Song – Song from Orsa. This is the area where Thomas was raised.

Debussy's *Golliwog's Cakewalk* followed – yet another exquisite gem amongst so much fine jewellery. The official concert finished with another composition by the Duo – *Everything's Alright*

Forever. We were advised that this was Mood Music. We were not to listen for a melody nor a rhythm but just to shut our eyes and relax. After being electrified, by the earlier playing, the audience all nodded off as if in a mass hypnotic trance!

However, the evening was not yet over. Rapturous applause produced two encores. The first was a somewhat crazy piece by Henrik Stringberg – *Unnggg* – which would translate to English as the word *Young* but perhaps spelt as *Younnnggg*. This explored all the different tones and sounds of the guitar. A natural wailing sound was produced by waving the guitar in the air (no Waa Waa pedal here). We heard Bartok slaps, the guitar played at the nut end of the fingerboard, finger nail scrapes along the strings (shriek!), guitar percussion and a sliding capo and even some 'bottle neck'. The audience were left in no doubt that Per Hallgren makes very, very robust guitars. How on earth is the music annotated for such a piece? The final encore piece was Piazzolla's *Milonga del Angel*, a wonderful piece on which to end one of the most memorable concerts ever.

For those who missed the experience of a lifetime, the Combo have a website <http://www.gbcombo.com/> and they have produced three cds. You can also see clips of them playing, but nothing will ever recapture the joy and pleasure of this live concert.

TW

Guitar Evening Classes

The Monday evening guitar classes at the Regis School of Music are well attended by members. As a reminder, there are two practical classes – Intermediate (up to grade IV) at 6:45 – 7:30pm given by Chris Sweatman MA (07900 893 096) and an advanced class (grade V and above) at 7:45 – 9:00pm given by Sasha Levtov (01243 866462).

In addition, there is a theory class taken by Katherine Ohno held between 6:00- 6:45pm. Last term they:

- 1) Learnt a little about melody, rhythm, pulse and harmony.
- 2) Grappled with the circle of fifths.

- 3) Tracked down the many and varied intervals.
- 4) Came to terms with modes of music – a western thing.
- 5) Even sang a little bit from the music without accompaniment- how awesome is that!
- 6) Got to work with their detective skills and analysed passages of music.

This was all interspersed with some of the history of music.

This term whilst progressing, they will be recapping. Add some more excitement to your life and join them. For more details contact Julie Insull on 01243 866605 or at julieinsull@aol.com

Gothenburg Combo Off Stage

Firstly I must congratulate you both on your superb command English.

Well, Sweden is a country of only 9 million people and no one else in the world speaks Swedish and so we have English as our second language. This is taught at schools, but also we have many English and American programmes on our television and these are not overdubbed, they have Swedish subtitles.

When did you start playing the guitar?

We both started playing at 9 years of age. Music in particular is strongly encouraged in schools. We went to music schools where we were taught all subjects, but the emphasis was on music.

Where did you meet?

We both went to Gothenburg University to study solo guitar and that is where we met. We have been playing as a duo for 9 years now.

I do not associate Sweden with guitars, but I am aware of the Gothenburg Ukulele Orchestra which I have seen. How many guitarists were on your course at University and who was your tutor?

At any time there are only maybe 4 or 5 guitarists studying solo guitar, but there are a few more guitarists studying how to teach the guitar. Our guitar tutor was Josef Halecek who is retired now. He originally studied under Karl Scheit who has written many transcriptions for the guitar.

This is the first time you have played in the UK and we are very privileged that for your UK premier you chose Bognor. You have played all over the world can you name some countries.

We have played in the USA, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, the Dominican Republic, China and all over Europe – Holland, Finland, France, Denmark, Norway, Albania, Estonia, Turkey, Spain, Germany and of course Sweden.

That makes us all the more honoured with your visit here. What size of audience do you play to?

We have played to small audiences from maybe 30 people to as many as 3500 in Shanghai where we were treated like pop stars!

Tell me about your guitars.

They are a matched pair of guitars made by the Swedish luthier Per Hallgren. They have a double top- that is to say they have two soundboards – one on top of the other. He is currently making us a pair of cedar guitars.

The guitars sound truly wonderful – but so much of that is also in how they are played. You are so together when you play. I notice that when you play you are not looking at each others hands, but at the face. How can you tell when each other is going to play from this.

If you look at the hands, you may not detect a slight movement and if you do you will be a little late in following. In the early days we used to nod or raise an eyebrow, but now that is not necessary. We can tell from the eyes when we are about to play.

Are either of your parents Musical?

No, they like music but are not performers.

Do you teach? What are your jobs?

We do teach a very little because we enjoy it, but our job is giving concerts – that is what we do. We have a studio in Gothenburg where we meet and play and that is better than playing at home, we feel we are going to work then!

You play a wide variety of music, do you have any particular type of music that you like?

No, there is good and bad music in all types. We have to really like what we play otherwise we would not play it

You have written some pieces yourselves, have you published any of it?

No, we do not have time. Furthermore, what we play often changes and evolves as we improve the piece, so the pieces may not be fixed.

What compositions are you currently working on?

We have written a suite on the 7 continents which we will put on to CD when we have time.

Where are you off to next?

We fly home to Sweden tomorrow, then next weekend we are off to the US to play 16 concerts in the mid states.

We all wish you every success for the future. TW

Hago has some empty seats



Contra, Classical, bass and alto guitars

Why do you play guitar? Yes you... Because you like playing it? Of course. But supposed you played bassoon. Would you play it furiously at home and then once a month meet with other bassoon players and play bassoon to each other? No, you'd practise at home and you'd join an orchestra with other, different sounds. And that's what HAGO, the Hampshire Guitar Orchestra is. We're not a guitar ensemble, we play four sizes of guitar; different sounds, different pitches. Like in a brass band, if you can play one size, you can play all sizes, and HAGO owns several of each of the non-standard sizes. Mind you, most of our players play their own classical guitar. Musical Director Derek Hasted writes "Guitar is my main instrument, but it was only when I learned to play brass and joined an ensemble did I realise how much fun it is to play with others. There are lines for weak players and lines for strong players, the louds are louder, the complex bits more impressive, and your playing is lifted by the magical sound all round you".

Not long afterwards, Derek founded HAGO and it's garnered a reputation as a performing ensemble that plays charity concerts for non-guitarists. HAGO's repertoire is quirky and massively varied. Sometimes, the "guitar ensemble" is unfortunately seen as the place where guitarists too weak to play solos serve their time before venturing out to play a solo, but that's a bit of a broad-brush denigration, as anyone who saw the LA Guitar Quartet at West Dean will tell you. Most symphony orchestras are full of excellent musicians, but they're not soloists, they're team-players and the camaraderie backstage is legendary.

The comment most guitarists come out with after hearing about HAGO is "Yes, but what a commitment". But it's not. It's our hobby. We do it because it's more fun than sitting indoors doing practice! And the commitment is for 18 Thursday evenings and 10 Saturday evenings a year. And we know most dates a whole year in advance. Some of our best players drive 40 miles each way to come to rehearsal, and Bognor's a lot closer than that. We've got some vacancies right now for players from Grade 5 to Diploma level. The music's not hard, but our play-list is vast, so we need good players happy to play simple music really well. Visit www.hago.org.uk to see us, hear us, and learn about our other sizes of guitar, or ring Derek on 023 9247 9200 for a chat. As our website says, we're positively passionate about guitar!

Derek Hasted

Amanda Cook Concert



It was good to see a well attended Concert Hall as once local girl Amanda made her welcome appearance on home ground. Amanda was originally taught the guitar from the age of 7 years by Sasha. She is patron of the Federation of Guitar Societies and is a life member of the WSGC and currently teaches at the Guildhall School of Music Junior Department. Her chosen instrument for the evening was made by the Dutch luthier Bert Kwakkel.

Amanda's last appearance at the club was over two years ago with the trio Apassionata and it was nice to see Hayley Savage from that trio in the audience. The first half of the concert was dedicated to Spanish pieces beginning with *Sonata K175* by Domenico Scarlatti. Although Italian, he lived in Madrid and this piece sounded very 'Spanish'. *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* the first of three tremolo pieces was beautifully executed – and brought back visions of the trickling fountains and water which helps to keep the gardens cool even on the hottest of days. Albeniz's *Asturias* by contrast displayed

some aggressive rasgueados. The first half ended with 6 of the 14 miniatures *Castles of Spain* which Torroba wrote for Segovia. With the exception of the Scarlatti, all of the pieces were well known and all the more enjoyable to be heard played so well.

The second half of the concert was more contemporary, containing a number of pieces written or arranged for the guitar by Bill Lovelady. These included *Sounds of Rain* and a tremolo piece

written in 1998 following the bombing in Omagh – *This Morning in Omagh the Sun Rose Again*. Probably my favourite piece of the evening was Lovelady's arrangement of George Shearing's *Lullaby of Birdland* with its wonderful rich chords. These rich chords were also in abundance in his arrangements of two Jimmy Van Heusen's compositions *Like Someone in Love* and *Here's That Rainy Day*. (Did you know Van Heusen was not his real name – he adopted that from the shirt manufacturers!) We also had some fine South American pieces *Callo Ciego* (a slow Tango by A Bardi) arranged by Jorge Morel and *Samba em Preludio* by Baden Powell and V. De Moraes.

The audience clearly enjoyed this programme of popular classics and lighter music and their enthusiastic applause was rewarded with a traditional piece from Peru – *Arriba los Panuelos* arranged by Javier Molina Salcedo. A fitting end to a most enjoyable evening of wonderful playing.

TW



Amanda meets Gabriel & Rebecca Caruana



Amanda meets Camilla and Dad



Peter Watkins chats to Amanda



Amanda meets her early teacher



Zoe Green with Hayley Savage & Amanda



Tony Buckwell Charms Amanda

World Youth Guitar Festival 2009



The Chichester Guitar Ensemble at WYGF 2009

Where to start? The World Youth Guitar Festival is held every 2 years for classical guitarists aged 8-18 (under 12s accompanied by an adult), and is run by an all-star team of artists, tutors and staff. This year's line-up included the likes of Brad Richter and Martha Masters from the USA, Frank Gerstmeier from Germany, Graham Devine, Gary Ryan, the Vida Guitar Quartet (Helen Sanderson, Mark Eden, Chris Stell & Mark Ashford) and many more.

Students are put in ability-graded orchestras of around 20-30 people (there were 7 this year), and each orchestra has two tutors and a mentor. Each tutor is responsible for a piece, which you spend time on during rehearsal sessions and the mentor is there to guide everyone through the week and provide support, as well as being in charge of tuning and warming up exercises in the mornings.

The agenda for the 4 day festival is full of all kinds of things to keep you busy, from orchestra rehearsals to workshops, concerts to oscars, and a pantomime. The location of this year's WYGF was the impressive Dean Close School in Cheltenham, boasting a 550 seat theatre, a fantastic swimming pool and AstroTurf pitches for use during games sessions. Almost every hour of every day was a highlight, but some of the most memorable for me include a game of football (or

soccer if you're Brad!) with Gary Ryan and Brad Richter (who are both scarily good), the 'Strumerella' panto (a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see Vincent Lindsey-Clark and Mark Eden dressed as women and Chris Stell as a fairy) and the showcase concerts; namely Gitarrenstadt Bad Nauheim's (a guitar group from Germany) frankly crazy performance.

The evening professional recitals from Graham Devine, the Vida Guitar Quartet, Martha Masters and Brad Richter gave us the opportunity to experience some of the best guitar playing around, all giving varied and spectacular performances. The student showcase concert was also a huge success, with all 7 orchestras and NYGE (the National Youth Guitar Ensemble) putting on a fantastic show to bring the amazing festival to a close.

It was an utterly inspiring event, meeting new friends and guitarists, honing both ensemble and solo playing in technique and posture through rehearsals and workshops (I can certainly say all aspects of my playing have greatly improved), and most of all immersing yourself in a world of guitars! A massive thanks to Helen, Mark and everyone who made it possible for this wonderful festival to happen, and for all those supporting the students who attended!

Adam Lack

West Dean—Jez Rogers Beginner's Guide

I had never been to the West Dean Summer School, mainly due to a regular holiday commitment. I've always heard people rave about it and always wondered if the hype was to be believed. As I was shortly to lessen my chances of attending by wandering off to the other side of the planet, I thought I really ought to go this year and find out what it was all about.

Registration was on the Saturday up until 3pm. I was a little late setting off, but still managed to arrive in time for the opening presentation conducted by John Mills and Marcus Martin. This was the typical welcome and introduction you might expect at such an event. After the welcome there was an orchestra session which was conducted by John Mills in the absence of Gerald Garcia who was lost somewhere in Germany, allegedly. I had received a couple of scores by email for the orchestra from Gerald, which I had managed to get a little practice on, but on reflection it could have been a bit more.

I also took part in an ensemble class lead by Alfonso Montes, a Venezuelan guitarist and composer. He was a little exacting (as was Gerald, when he wasn't wise cracking) and I was probably working a little bit harder than I'm used to in an ensemble group, but nothing that wasn't achievable with a little effort. I'd say that you would need to be of secure grade V standard to get the most out of the orchestra and ensemble yet there were several folks who clearly weren't – one in particular who had no idea how to tune down to D and kicked up a bit of a fuss until given a part which didn't require it. The ensemble and orchestra are optional classes which you don't have to take part in. I'm not sure that I made a conscious decision to take part and I'm still a little vague as to how I got entered in to them but I do remember indicating that I did have some ensemble experience so maybe that was what it was.

Other than the ensembles, you are entitled to two masterclasses and also a couple of "repertoire" classes, these coming in two flavours "formal" and "informal". I wasn't really sure which was which and what the distinction was but I did notice that some of them clashed with the orchestra which was a shame. It also seemed to be the case that they were a little oversubscribed and

unless you had a word in advance with the tutor you would most probably end up watching and not playing. You were supposed to have your card stamped to say you'd taken part but I don't remember anyone waving these around or asking to see them. Perhaps the arrangements for these classes might be improved next year. I managed to play in only one repertoire class, where I got to inflict the *King of Denmark's Galliard* on Paul Gregory, who very politely told me to play more like a woman. Thanks Paul, no more beer for you!

By contrast to the repertoire classes, the masterclasses were arranged in advance. Somehow I managed to get put into a public masterclass with Leo Brouwer. This was I think as a result Youtube -ing myself playing *Un Dia de Noviembre*. According to Marcus, Youtube was in fact the easiest format for them to use, a plethora of other formats on various media causing all sorts of headaches. However, I had an extra 15 minutes with John Mills beforehand, in order to attempt to fix some of the more egregious errors and misreadings before I got anywhere near the Maestro. My performance was the last of the afternoon, which gave me plenty of time to panic and generally work on the blood pressure, but it went reasonably well despite Brouwer adjusting my tuning while I played and stating that he didn't really like the piece before I'd even started! He was a very pleasant chap and not at all self important as you might expect someone of such international significance to be. Several times throughout the performances he expressed the view that the music was no longer his, it was the performer's, and that the score is nothing more than a map. How you make the journey is your business. However, there were plenty of things for him to attend to with regard to my interpretation of *Un Dia*. Having had the benefit of Brouwer's attention, I had a number of people want to talk to me about it and look at the score which prior to that evening was devoid of any extra annotation but now had Brouwer's hand writing all over it.

On top of all this, there were various lectures and talks, most of which were interesting and worth going along to, in particular Paul Gregory's talk on when to use rest stroke. There were of course a number of concerts, including the

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West Dean...

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LA Guitar Quartet (which I unfortunately couldn't attend), Graham Devine (superb as always) and the Duo Montes-Kircher.

Thursday night was the student concert, where a lot of us played. I managed a quite reasonable (well I thought so) rendition of *Smoke Rising* towards the end of the first half and was then able to relax and enjoy the rest of the evening.

Most events went on into the evening, and it was pleasing that there was a reasonably priced bar where you could relax afterwards. Alas it was at this point that I really regretted my decision not to go for a residential place. There was a good amount of conversation and atmosphere to be soaked up, with all the great and the good (with the exception of Brouwer) in attendance. Thursday night was particularly well attended and the late night (or so I'm told) didn't adversely affect the final ensemble and orchestra performances on the Friday morning.

Not being residential also restricts you to a few nooks and crannies if you want to find somewhere to practice and I did get moved on a couple of times.

Overall I found the week highly enjoyable and I learnt a few things. It was just great to be immersed in all things guitar for that length of time without 'er indoors moaning about the washing up.

My recommendations for anyone attending for the first time would be:

- 1) Go for a residential place
- 2) Try not to overindulge – the food is great
- 3) Try to book repertoire classes early
- 4) Make time to practice any pieces sent out in advance
- 5) Enjoy

Would I go again? Yes, most probably I would, bearing in mind the not insignificant cost of attending from the southern hemisphere.

Jez Rogers

WSGC at Arundel Castle



Tom, Sally, Annita and Margaret in the Barons' Hall

On the morning of Saturday 8th August a group of members of all ages gathered at the lower entrance to Arundel Castle. On Sasha's arrival we were all transported by Golf Buggies to the Baron's Hall – surely a first for the Club! The paying guests looked on enviously as we swept past up the steep hill.

The Barons' Hall is an imposing, even intimidating space. Tradition and history weigh heavily on all who enter it. A playing area on the raised stage area had been arranged with seats for visitors to take time off from sight-seeing to enjoy the Club's musical offering and we were given a very warm welcome by the staff, who were keen to tell us that live music helps to make the wonderful building come alive.

Sasha had decided that the Club would present early music and opted to eschew any form of compering, preferring to let the music speak for itself. There were two slots of about 60 minutes each devoted mostly to solo guitar. I was very impressed by our youngest performer James Li-Kam-Tin, whose *Sarabande* and *Bourree* by J.S. Bach were beautifully secure. Then Sam Brown in pieces by Dowland and J.S. Bach showed how

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much his playing is developing in maturity and poise.

Jez Rogers, in what was one of his last Club appearances, gave a fine performance of pieces by Dowland. Mitch Callow braved the acoustics with his baroque guitar in pieces by de la Murcia and Bach. I particularly enjoyed his *Canarios*.

Paul Thomas treated us to some Bach and Dowland's *My Lady Hunsdon's Puffe* and reminded us just what a fine player he is.

Alison Stonestreet and Patrick Butcher opted for duet arrangements for guitar and recorder by Handel and Praetorius that sounded most effective and caused many visitors to stop and listen.

In the afternoon I was joined by Sally Morris

(bass viol), Margaret McDonald (flute) and Annita Lemon (recorder) and we played repertoire from the renaissance and baroque periods, all of which had the guitar as the main continuo instrument, including Dowland songs, dances by Johnson and van Eyck and sonatas by Corelli and Schickardt.

Playing in such a historical venue is a great honour and it is to be hoped that the Club will be asked to appear again. Playing solo in the Barons' Hall is, however, a frightening experience, so I would suggest that next time there should be more ensembles. Perhaps the players could all sit on stage all the time with Sasha treating the visitors to his inimitable links between items. He is, after all, one of the jewels in the Club's crown!

Tom Jeffers.

Editor's Piece

As always the hamster wheel of life seems to go ever faster. In no time at all, we have begun our new season, held a combined AGM and club evening, had 3 concerts and held another club evening.

Because so much has gone on with events held over the summer recess and in the new season, this edition is quite large. I must thank all the contributors to this newsletter. It is your newsletter so please have your say and write in to me (contact details on last page). Copy is acceptable in any currency – e-mail, cd, printed or hand written paper or even on the back of £20 notes!

Take a look at the current copy of Classical Guitar. It has a 4 page spread about the WSGC together with an interview with Sasha.

I am glad to report we have recruited 4 new members since the last newsletter. A big welcome to you all.

I am sure we all wish Jez Rogers and family the very best in their new venture in New Zealand and would love to hear how things are going out there. Who knows, he may even start a mass emigration of WSGC members to the antipodes!

The first concert of the season started off with a huge audience. However, sadly this reduced with each successive concert, resulting in one of our lowest ever attendances for the Swedish Gothenburg Combo which ironically was one of our

best concerts. I know many members had good reasons for non-attendance and hopefully it was an unfortunate combination of factors that kept the numbers down. I cannot believe that television is the distraction since it is no longer necessary to watch TV live now. Almost every concert we hold loses the club money, so it is important that you not only attend, but also bring along friends and neighbours. Otherwise apart from being financially embarrassing it is also embarrassing for the Club and for the performers. We send out diary stickers and even give a complimentary ticket to each member to bring along a guest to any concert in the season. If you have any ideas on how to improve matters, please let the committee know. Last year we sent out a concert questionnaire – What do you want to see? Do you prefer Friday or Saturday concerts etc. The results were inconclusive - only 3 replies were received from 100 members one preferred Fridays, one Saturdays and the other did not mind either!

It will soon be our West Sussex Guitar Festival with Gary Ryan and Hayley Savage as adjudicators. Now, don't forget Gary's Festival concert on Friday 13th Nov! Good luck with the practicing and the competition, but remember that it is the pearls of wisdom from the adjudicators that are the most valuable reward from the competition.

Making a Classical Guitar Part 1



Club member Tony Buckwell has kindly produced a series of in depth articles on making a classical guitar. The articles will be serialised over the course of the next few editions of Good Vibrations. Tony has made a number of guitars and also a hurdy-gurdy and so can point out the various pitfalls in making such an instrument. Although many of us may not have the facilities nor time to make our own instrument, the articles do give a fascinating insight into what goes on in the manufacture. Later articles may also be of interest in setting up your own guitar. If you have any comments or questions on this series of articles address them to the Editor of "Good Vibrations" (address back page) who will be pleased to pass them on to Tony Buckwell.

1. Why I did it

Forty four years ago I was obliged to relinquish my treasured Bechstein piano for a wife. This was due to the impossibility of inducing her up eight flights of narrowing stairs to our new apartment - the piano that is. An understudy therefore had to be urgently

found (not for my wife you understand). So an instrument rather more portable than half a ton of iron-framed piano was needed and electronic keyboards still awaited invention. A zither perhaps ? Anton Karas's Harry Lime theme from "The Third Man" was still very popular but the prospect of playing the same tune time and again would become very tedious. Then on the car radio I heard Segovia playing and immediately realised that my quest was over. I knew nothing about the different species of guitars let alone how to choose a good one. So, like Captain Kirk, I decided to split fearlessly my infinitives and to enter boldly a music shop where I had not before gone. After giving myself away by holding the first one the wrong way round, I pretended to strum a few discords. Eventually, and to save further embarrassment and yet more solecisms and errors of syntax, I chose a nice shiny one called a "Moridaira" solely on the basis that something sounding like a cross between a cheap Spanish wine and an Italian pizza should be alright for a beginner - despite its being Japanese. Anyway, it turned out to be rather a good choice because, contrary to those Japanese cars of fifty odd years ago, I still own it, it has never gone rusty and is still drivable.

Many sets of strings later and some lessons came the growing desire for a more responsive instrument with a fuller sound, but lacking the residual wealth required for a Romanillos or a Rubio, I decided that the only solution was to make one myself. If you want a challenge then building your own guitar is certainly an ambitious one. But, as in most things, enthusiasm being easily kindled, it unfortunately needs to be kept burning with perseverance, patience and a willing endurance to overcome all those inevitable mistakes and setbacks. Not least, some prior woodworking skills will prove very helpful. Passion, obsession and a lot of surplus time are good too.

Since 1980, when time allowed, I have made several classical guitars for both myself and for others as commissions plus several other types of musical instruments including a hurdy-gurdy (I may even get around to that zither one day). I soon realised when making my first guitar with only a couple of books to guide me that there was still a lot

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to learn. It was not until my second and third guitars, plus yet many more hours under the tuition of a skilled luthier, that I began to comprehend the mysteries.

2. A hand crafted guitar is better than mass produced

I am often asked "Did you make it from a kit?" and have to politely explain that there is no such thing, and to my knowledge, there never has been. However, if you have a resolute desire for an 'authentic' Stratocaster copy or a Les Paul electric, such things are available from Saga Kits. But there's really no point in bothering because it will sound exactly the same as the factory made version in the shop. That's because all electric guitars have to have a solid, acoustically dead, non responsive body. The vibrations of the highly tensioned steel strings are synthetically changed into electronic pulses by the magnetically sensitive pickups and then fed into an amplifier, so there must be no interference from other stray resonances or overtones produced by the body itself. For acoustic and classical guitars however exactly the opposite applies as the entire body needs to freely vibrate and exploit all the naturally synchronised harmonic overtones. This is why the body is hollow and is able to create its own unique qualities of volume, tone and resonance without the aid of any electronics.

Although your first guitar will probably not sound like Segovia's Fleta did, it will without question be better than a £50 factory produced student model from Taiwan (which includes string winder, pitch pipes, CD, foot stool, and oh yes, a free guitar). The reason being that you will personally select the best quality seasoned woods, use your own skills and craftsmanship to design and construct it and employ the best traditions of past classical guitar luthiers. All of these things will undoubtedly contribute to giving it greater volume, sustain and that ethereal character of its own unique harmonious resonance.

3. A Brief history of guitar design from Torres to Romanillos

The modern classical guitar has taken some two hundred years of modification and technical development to reach its present state of the art.

Musical instrument making is one of the few remaining hand crafted skills, carried out by a single artisan throughout, which persists in this modern world. The history and development of classical guitar design is not only intriguing but is important to understand. Prior to around 1800 the six stringed 'salon' guitar had developed from the vihuela, and not, as is often mistakenly stated, from the al'ud via the lute. The guitar was then a relatively small instrument with an equally small volume, of restricted vocal range and limited sustain. As such, it had become inadequate for the demands of players and composers like Sor, Carulli, Aguado, and Giuliani. Several virtuoso guitarists began collaborating with makers to improve the volume and sound quality of the instrument, for example Sor with Rene-Francois Lacote in France, and Legnani with Johann Stauffer in Vienna. Around 1850 the guitarist Julian Arcas encouraged the Spanish maker Antonio de Torres to make for him a larger bodied guitar with a wider neck. From then onwards until 1869 Torres made such guitars in Seville for Francisco Tarrega, who himself was completely revising and transforming its playing techniques. Torres carefully modified the shape of the preceding Vihuela by broadening the body, and increasing the waist curve. He thinned down the Swiss Pine sound board and added fan bracing underneath to strengthen and improve its resonance. He substituted the irrational double courses of strings with six single ones and lengthened them to 650 mm. To facilitate the tuning of these longer strings he replaced the wooden pegs with geared machine heads. The pretty gothic tracery rosette over the sound hole had a rather muffling effect so he eliminated it but retained the Arabic style mosaic marquetry inlay around it for decorative reasons. He incorporated a flat plate and wide braces on the underside to add strength and prevent splitting at this vulnerable point. All of these improvements are now universally embodied in the design of the modern concert guitar.

Since 1935 the American chemical company Du Pont had been trying to develop an artificial substitute for silk to use in the textile industry. This new thread was given a sequence of names, firstly 'no-run' (as in stockings, but unfortunately that's precisely what it did). Then 'nuron' (spelled

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Guitar Making...

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backwards) then 'nilon' (how to pronounce it?) and finally 'nylon'. (Incidentally the acronym N/ew /Y/ork /Lon/don is an urban myth) .

Then in 1948 Andres Segovia encouraged the luthier Albert Augustine in New York to develop nylon fishing line as tensionable strings to replace the traditional gut for the trebles with metal wound filaments for the basses.

Such collaborations still continue for example between Julian Bream, David Rubio and Jose Romanillos for whom Bream established a workshop in Dorset. Romanillos and other luthiers have re-introduced the tornavoz in some of their guitars. A tornavoz is a conical cylinder made of either thin copper, brass, or wood veneer fixed inside the sound hole. It was probably invented by Antonio de Torres who used it in many of his guitars. It is claimed by some luthiers and players to improve the volume and to balance out the tonal qualities. If you want to hear if one improves your guitar a removable one can be made from thin flexible acetate sheet which can be inserted between the slackened off G and D strings and then fixed around inside the sound hole with invisible tape.

Other varieties of guitar include a ten stringed one played by Narciso Yepes, and seven or eight stringed versions with various confusing tunings and last but not least the Brahms guitar made specially by David Rubio for Paul Galbraith on which he plays only Brahm's transcriptions.

Luthiers continue to evaluate and try out new materials and construction methods relating to the sound board. The composite or 'Double Top' variety as employed for example by Gernot Wagner and Matthias Dammann comprises two very thin (0.5mm) layers of either spruce or cedar with a 1mm thick core of honeycombed 'nomex' which is used in aircraft wings, all laminated together with epoxy adhesive with a vacuum pump. The lens resonance system (LRS) was patented in 1999 in Sweden by Liikanen and Florath having a thin lens shaped piece of wood under the bridge and the table strengthened with a lattice of cross braces. The Australian luthier Greg Smallman makes his cedar soundboards ultra-thin and again braces them with

a lattice grid of eighteen cross struts made of balsa and carbon fibre. His guitars have a much thicker rosewood back and an armrest on the lower bout. The use of a pattern of sound port holes cut out in the upper bout near the neck is becoming increasingly fashionable and is claimed to enable the player to better hear the instrument. Some of these quests for improvement are probably more intuitional and the acoustic outcomes more cognitive than scientifically provable but all have their advocates and detractors.

Whilst a left handed piano may be something of a rarity, left handed guitarist are rather more commonplace. Unfortunately, many have had to learn to play on a right handed guitar. A musical instrument retailer will frequently try to sell a standard guitar to the innocent parent of a young left handed beginner by saying "that's okay squire, just re-string it the other way round." Knowing a right handed guitar has the bass strings uppermost when held in the playing position this may be superficially true of the left handed version also. However there are several other aspects of the design and construction which need to be reversed and not just the stringing. It is completely impossible for a reverse strung instrument to have the proper tonal or playing qualities unless it has been purpose made. The sound board on a good quality instrument will be graduated from around 2 mm thick on the treble side to 3 mm on the bass side. The depth of the fan struts will also vary from 2 mm on the treble to 5 mm on the bass and any additional struts along the bottom will also be tapered. Many luthiers insert a transverse tone bar under the table at an angle from bass to treble side. A left handed fret board will also need to be on the opposite hand because of its 'relief' which is designed to give greater clearance under the vibrating bass strings. Finally the bridge saddle will be slightly higher under the bass side for the same reason and may even be angled for improved pitch accuracy. So, not as simple as you tried to make out was it Mr.Salesman ?

To be continued...

Tony Buckwell

WSGC AGM

Our new season started with a combined club evening and AGM. The youngsters started the evening and I think this is one of the rewards of having a club like ours where we see such improvements in their playing and more difficult pieces tackled each time they perform.

In the business part of the evening, your new committee was voted in. With the emigration of Jez Rogers (Treasurer and Membership Officer) to New Zealand and the retirement of Tony Poulett (Sponsorship Officer), Patrick Butcher has kindly offered to undertake a number of roles – Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Sponsorship Officer in addition to continuing as Charity Officer. The rest of the committee remains unchanged – Alison and David Stonestreet as Librarians and Moyria Woodgate as Secretary, Press Officer, Archivist and Photographer. Irina Ilieva is Hospitality Officer and Sasha Levtov is Artistic Director. Fortunately, Jez Rogers has volunteered to continue as Club Webmaster – a task that he can undertake even at the antipodes. Terry Woodgate is Chairman and Newsletter Editor. If you have any queries or problems, please see any of the committee.

Thanks were expressed to Jez Rogers and Tony Poulett for their sterling work for the club over the past years. Alison and David Stonestreet were thanked for all their hard work in producing a guitar library second to none. All entries (music and recordings) have now been catalogued and entered

on a database which can be accessed via the Internet from the comfort of your own home. Alison said that the library now holds all the music for the new Trinity syllabus. Sasha thanked all the committee for their dedication over the past year.

Concern was expressed at the low attendances at concerts. It is essential that we fill the concert hall. This helps to keep us financially viable and also is encouraging for the performers. We get very little mention in the local newspaper despite timely articles being sent in. It was suggested that more promotional flyers be displayed and Barry Beckett undertook to do this. It was also decided that to promote the Club, members would be given a complimentary ticket to bring along one guest to any concert in the year.

A request was made for more help. With a much reduced committee, help is required tidying up after events and helping out at festivals and other events. Overall, members felt the club was on track – in addition to the 6 or 7 concerts and club evenings each year, and a guitar workshop we perform at events to help other charities. We also fund bursaries to help our youngsters attend various guitar courses.

The evening concluded with some fine playing from our adult members.

TW

Summer Events 2009

Although the WSGC formally closed down at our summer party on 11th July, there were a number of events throughout the summer where members of the WSGC played.

On 20th July, Jez Rogers, Karim Bedda and Sam Brown played at St Joseph's Convent Littlehampton. This is a popular event where the evening is shared between the Barn Choir and the guitar club. There was an enthusiastic audience of over 100 and although entry is free, there is a voluntary donation for the orphans of Lima in Peru. This year over £1230 was raised. Well done those who played. When added to the TEARS charity earlier in the year where over £700 was raised, that

makes a grand total of nearly £2000 that the club has raised for charities. Well done everyone.

The WSGC had three sessions of playing at the Barons' Hall in Arundel Castle on 8th August. This is a very prestigious venue for members to play in, with superb acoustics. Many thanks to all who performed appropriate music up until the Baroque period. This was a good opportunity to promote the club to the public.

On 22nd August Jez Rogers, Chris Sweatman and Karim Bedda played a session at the Alexandra Theatre in Bognor Regis for the Nyodema Brikama Charity. This is a charity to

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Summer Events 2009...

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fight poverty through music and has helped hundreds of children in The Gambia, West Africa. It may be of interest to mention that Peter Salway who tunes and services the pianos at the school also contributed to this charity. He purchased a £250 Mercedes 280E banger, spent some considerable time fettling it and with a friend drove all the way to Istanbul and back - some 5000 miles in total. His sponsorship managed to raise an incredible £1600 to be shared between Nyodema and Help the Aged. How brave and adventurous to tackle such a drive in a 27 year old vehicle!

On the 28th August the WSGC hosted an evening at the Selsey Centre as part of the Selsey

Festival. The Club gave good account of itself with performances from The Regis Guitars, Tamzin, Zoe and Linda Barnett, Sally Paice, Jenny Craven, The Alison Stonestreet and Patrick Butcher Duo, Roy Barron, Jez Rogers, Tom Emery, Karim Bedda, Chris Sweatman and Sam Brown. This was another opportunity to promote the club and show what we are about - a family club for all ages who love the guitar. All of the money raised at the door went to our club. Many thanks to all who played and to Sally Paice and her family who arranged the event and always make us all so welcome.

TW



Roy Barron at Selsey



The Performers at Selsey



James Li-Kam-Tin at Arundel Castle



The Performers at Arundel Castle

Xuefei Yang Off Stage

Do you come from a musical family

No, although my father did play a Chinese instrument in an amateur band

You started playing the guitar at the age of 7. Why the guitar?

When I was a little girl I was very energetic and my parents thought if I learnt a musical instrument, it would calm me down. At first an accordion was considered, but that would have been too heavy and then my music teacher at school suggested a guitar. At first I just accompanied singers, but later played solo classical pieces.

Did the Western music sound strange to you at first?

Not really, Western music is now really world music which is heard nearly everywhere, particularly in China since the cultural revolution.

You play solo and you play with orchestras. Do you also play in ensembles?

Yes, I have played with singers, flute, saxophone and accordion. In fact I have just returned from Belgium where I played with a choir.

When playing with an orchestra, do you follow the conductor, or does he follow you?

The orchestra is accompanying me, so really the conductor should follow me. However, I think there is an age issue here. When I was young the conductors would tell me how a piece was to be played, but now I am older they ask how I would like it to be played!

Presumably you practice your parts and the orchestra practice their parts, but you do not actually get together until the day of the concert. How does that work out with tempo etc.

That is right, I talk to the conductor on the day of the concert and we discuss the piece. We may play a few bars from each movement, but there is not generally time to rehearse the whole suite.

However, we are all musicians and even if it may sound a little chaotic at rehearsals, I think the actual concerts all go well.

Do you play other instruments?

Yes I studied piano as a second instrument in China, but in England I only studied guitar. Neil Muir interjected here to say that she actually won first prize on piano at the Beijing Conservatoire even though it was her second instrument. He said that Fei plays wonderful Chopin.

I see you have played in over 40 countries, there must be few places you have not played?

I have not played on the South American continent nor in New Zealand, but I have played in most of Europe and the East and Australia and North America.

You play a wide variety of music. Do you have a favourite type of music?

I do enjoy all the music that I play, but if I had to choose I think I prefer the romantic, more lyrical pieces.

You are a performer and you have arranged many pieces for the guitar. Do you also compose or teach?

I hope to eventually try composing some time in the future. I do not teach at present, but I do sometimes give masterclasses.

Finally, do you have any tips for aspiring guitarists. What proportion of time should be spent playing pieces and say doing exercises?

For a beginner exercises are important, but they do not have to be boring. If there is a tricky passage to play in a piece of music, try to make an exercise out of it. It will be more fun and more tuneful. There are many good tuneful studies for players now and there are still the old favourites - the Tarrega and some Villa Lobos studies.

TW

Xuefei Yang ...

(Continued from page 20)

so it was only fitting that Fei included two pieces by these Spanish composers. Albeniz's *Suite Espana Opus 165 (Seis Hojas de Album)* consisted of 6 movements all arranged by Fei. The pieces were typical Albeniz, so romantic and lyrical and superbly played. From Tarrega we heard two of his arrangements of popular pieces of his time – A Fantasy on Verdi's *La Traviata* and variations on the traditional *Carnival of Venice*. Both were happy and amusing pieces with much humour in the playing, but with wonderful virtuoso endings. Tarrega was truly a master of the guitar since he was very much a pioneer in such grand works be they compositions or arrangements. I obtained Tarrega's arrangement of the *Carnival of Venice* some 40 years ago, but never got around to playing it. I don't think I will bother now, it looks way beyond my capabilities!

The second half began with a Chinese piece which has a story over 2000 years old. This concerns a Romeo and Juliet type romance. A young girl dresses as a boy in order to go to school to be educated, there being no education for girls in those days. She meets a boy at the school and they become close friends as they grow older. Their parents are against the friendship and after many adventures they turn into butterflies and fly away. This is somewhat similar to the story on willow pattern plates where the lovers turn into doves and fly away. Anyway, again we heard Fei's

solo arrangement of part of the suite originally written for violin and orchestra. We then heard some wonderful arrangements of some more recent popular music. Roland Dyens arrangements of *All of Me* and *Felicade*, Bonfa's *Manha de Carnival* and Takemitsu arrangements of the Beatles *Yesterday* and *Michelle*. Fei said that she particularly likes Beatles music. None of these arrangements were for the faint hearted with complicated walking bass lines, and finger twisting chords moving rapidly over the fingerboard. The formal concert ended with *Sunburst* by Andrew York and Rodriguez's Argentine Tango *la Cumparsita* which he wrote when he was only 17 years old. I always think of the dance sequence in the film *Some Like It Hot* when I hear this – really wonderful stuff.

A packed house like we had did not want the concert to end and we were treated to two brilliant encores from Fei. The first by the Venezuelan composer Lauro was *Seis for Derecho* and the second based on a Chinese song which Fei used to sing in primary school – *Plum Blossom in Snow* arranged by Gerald Garcia.

We must hope it is not too long before Fei returns to us again. In the meantime we will have to make do with Fei's cds. Fei has made four cds, and they sold like hot cakes at the concert. Her latest CD *40 Degrees North*, sold out!

TW

Zoe Green's View of West Dean

West Dean was an amazing learning experience. Not only were the guitar lessons beneficial, but to be in an atmosphere where music lives and breathes has opened my eyes to a much wider variety of repertoire.

I've heard everything from Bach lute suites to a piece about a dancing self conscious unicorn. I went to lots of interesting talks, but some more so than others. The best talks were a debate about whether to teach *apoyando* or *tirando* first, and another talk on the year 1909 by Graham Wade. This was a big year for classical guitar history, since Albeniz and Tarrega died, and Segovia gave his first recital. The most memorable part was listening to a very old scratchy recording of

someone playing the guitar faintly but beautifully. This was thought to be the only recording Tarrega ever made. To be in a room with maestros debating whether it was in fact him or not was fascinating. There were also ensemble classes, and a guitar orchestra, which after a few rehearsals managed to put together a good performance at the concert on the last day.

I am very grateful to West Sussex Guitar Club for their generous bursary to make this possible. Thank you very much, and I recommend West Dean Summer School to anyone who loves the classical guitar, whether student or experienced or just beginning to play.

Zoe Green



Xuefei meets Barry & Vi Beckett



Xuefei and Julie Insull



Xuefei and Pablo Requena



Xuefei meets Daphne Snocken



Xuefei with Irina Ilieva



Paul Gregory & Xuefei relax after the concert

Xuefei Yang Concert



Our new season got off to a cracking start with a superb concert given at short notice by Fei on her return from Belgium. It was really most encouraging to see our concert hall packed to the gunnels as people had come from far and wide to see one of the most popular of the new generation of guitarists. There were many new faces in the audience which we hope will return. The furthest travelled was from Hull, but there were people from Basingstoke, Chobham and London. Many came because of the Internet, our performers rarely getting a mention in the local newspaper these days.

We were treated to a concert of enjoyable lighter pieces each one carefully crafted by this master of the guitar. For our small intimate hall, Fei played her second guitar in preference to the louder and heavier Smallman. This spruce top instrument was built in the Torres style by the German luthier Karl-Heinz Rommich. However, she is trying out a guitar made by luthier member Pablo Requena in this picture.

The concert began with two well known pieces by Bach. 2009 was the centenary of the deaths of Isaac Albeniz and Francisco Tarrega and

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Dates for your Diary

Nov	7th	Club Evening	Dec	5th	Club Evening
Nov	13th	Gary Ryan Festival Concert (Fri)	Dec	19th	Christmas Party
Nov	14/15	Junior Classes WSGF	Jan	16th	Club Judicael Peroy
Nov	21/22	Senior Classes WSGF	Jan	23rd	Club Evening

Most events take place on Saturdays at 7.30pm in the Regis School of Music, 46 Sudley Road, Bognor Regis PO21 1ER. For details phone 01243 866462. For concert tickets phone 01243 866462 or visit the

Ticket Hotline at www.westsussexguitar.com

Please send contributions for the next edition of *Good Vibrations* by **20th December** to Terry Woodgate, 3, East Ave., Middleton on Sea, West Sussex PO22 6EG tel: 01243 583355 or e-mail to: terry_woodgate@btinternet.com

The West Sussex Guitar Club is grateful for the continued support of:

