

## Gary Ryan Festival Concert

**T**he West Sussex Guitar Festival began with a concert on Friday evening given by Gary Ryan, Professor of Guitar at the Royal College of Music. The Recital Hall was really packed to capacity as one of the biggest audiences ever, braved the gales and torrential rain to see one of the country's most popular and accomplished guitarist perform a spectrum of music ranging from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century to some of his own current compositions. Sometimes, unfortunately concerts will start a little late, as in this case, but it is not our policy to shut the doors while the audience is still coming along. It is interesting that our two recent Friday concerts with Xuefei and Gary were both very well attended. Is Friday preferable to a Saturday we wonder? The club receives a lot of support from Bognor Town Council and on this occasion, we were very pleased to welcome the Mayor of Bognor Regis, Councillor Eileen



Anderson to Gary's concert.

The concert began with John Williams's arrangements of some very early pieces from Michael Praetorius's *Terpsichore* - the *Courante, Ballet and La Volta*. We then heard Gary's arrangement of Bach's *Violin Partita No. 1*. He explained that he kept as close

as possible to the original score without any bass harmonies. For the most part we heard single notes, but we could hear the various threads running throughout the pieces – rather as Gary is always telling us to try to express when he wears his adjudicating hat. This was followed by Albeniz's beautiful *Mallorca*, this time in the original key of Dm rather than the more usual Segovia arrangement in F<sup>#</sup>m. The first half was really packed with 'lollipops' as we next heard the *Sakura Variations* (based on a Japanese folk song which worships the transient cherry blossom which only lasts for 2 weeks). The first half

concluded with Tarrega's *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* and Gary's own very busy composition *Metropolis*.

The second half began with what Gary called the 'weird piece'. He explained that in the 1960's Julian Bream would always have such a piece in his programme which the audience would 'jolly well have to listen to'. This time it was Benjamin Britten's *Nocturnal* which was a theme and variations after Dowland, but unusually written in reverse. The piece begins with various movements of restless sleep, but eventually blossoms into Dowland's *Passacaglia* (the best part!) I think it was a great challenge to try to convert many in the audience to take to some 20 minutes of such atonal music, but some aficionados enjoyed the piece. We were then back on more familiar ground with Sor's *Variations on Mozart's Magic Flute*. The official part of the concert finished with Gary's *Scenes From the Wild West*. A very popular, if not the most popular suite of modern guitar music. The enthusiastic audience

(Continued on page 3)

### New Members

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

**Sue Allen**

*from Birdham*

**Ashley Nicholls**

*from Chichester*

We hope you enjoy
   
 many happy evenings at
   
 the Club!



*Linda's SAMC Guitar Orchestras*



*Gary with the Under 9 class*



*The West Dean Class*



*Gary's postural masterclass*



*Zoe Barnett wins the cup*



*Gary & Sasha after the Junior Festival*

## Gary Ryan Concert ...

*(Continued from page 1)*

were treated to an encore of another of Gary's pieces – *Lough Caragh* which he wrote while on holiday in Ireland.

This was a very popular concert and it was reassuring to see such a large audience. Unfortunately, we all generated so many kilowatts of heat that it was necessary to open the outside doors. Part way through the concert the gales caught

the doors and slammed them shut accompanied by a resounding smash of glass. True performer that he is, Gary continued to play totally unfazed by the whole episode. As if he did not have enough to do with the festival beginning the following day, poor Sasha then had to undertake the job of glazier late at night in order to secure the building.

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## Gary Ryan Off Stage

*Are you from a musical family?*

No, I am not, but my maternal father is reputed to have played the flute.

*How did you come to play the guitar?*

As a child I could work out tunes by ear on a toy xylophone. A friend had a piano and I used to enjoy going to his house and playing it. I wanted my parents to buy a piano, but of course these were very expensive. I remember at the age of 7, one Christmas I was given a guitar (a cheaper option than the piano) and a Rod Hull Emu puppet. That was one of my best ever Christmases!

*How did you learn to play and did you continue with the piano?*

We had a visiting guitar teacher at school. I obtained grade 3 at the age of 8 years. I then went to the Guildhall School of Music every Saturday with my mother to have guitar lessons with David Miller. I then obtained a scholarship to the Royal Academy where I then studied with Timothy Walker. However when I was 10 we did finally get a piano and I then had piano lessons.

*You have been professor of guitar at the Royal College of Music for some time now. What does that involve?*

I basically teach students guitar mostly on a one to one basis, but I also give aural lessons on the keyboard to groups and teach musical harmony and oversee chamber music.

*How many students study guitar at the College?*

It varies. At the moment we have just 12 students (including post graduates), but typically we may have 18 or so.

*Your Guitar France course with Craig Ogden is very successful I believe.*

We have just had a 4<sup>th</sup> successful year and we have a number of regular attendees. It is set in the beautiful French countryside and can be a nice holiday especially if people stop on for a few days afterwards.

*I believe you play keyboard, but not guitar in a band.*

Yes I play keyboard in a function band where we perform a variety of standards. From this I get some of my non-conventional ideas of composing – getting the guitar to make unusual sounds and the like.

*Do you have time for any other interests/hobbies?*

Naturally our children keep me occupied, but I do enjoy reading, cinema, chess, football and walking.

*What other projects of you have coming up?*

I am off on a cultural musical Mediterranean cruise later this week where I will be giving a number of concerts on board ship. I do need to find time to record some more music. For example I would like to record my duet Bazaar which I have played just twice with Craig and also some Bach. I would also like to put some of my trickier pieces on Youtube so that students can see how I play.

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## *West Sussex Guitar Festival 2009*

**T**his was a very successful event with even more entrants than last year. There is no doubt that the standard of performances improves year on year regardless of age or grade of playing. Well done to everyone who took part and shared their music with the audience. Many years ago a marathon race was only entered by a few super fit athletes. Now, thanks to knowledge on how to optimise the training and on how the human machine works, thousands of ordinary people enter marathons each year. In a way this has a parallel with the guitar where even very young performers are tackling concert pieces that many years ago only top maestros would have ever dared to play. The new younger generation of guitar players have stood on the shoulders of these earlier giants and pioneers who optimised playing techniques and this knowledge has been successively passed down through generations of good teachers. The adjudicators often had many difficult decisions to make, particularly when different performers have different outstanding attributes.

Gary Ryan was adjudicator for the under 18s and Hayley Savage was adjudicator for the adults. The competitions took place over two very full weekends. It was interesting to see that the comments made by Gary were also picked up by Hayley and to a large extent they applied to both juniors and adults, whether they were beginners or advanced players. Some of their observations are given below:

**Nerves:** Because of nervousness, you will never perform as well as you had hoped. Because of this, you must get to know the piece really well. Gary said you will learn more in one performance than you ever will in ten lessons. A performance requires the utmost focus and concentration. If things are going well, do not relax and look at the audience (or mum!) that is a sure sign of trouble to come. Maybe try easier pieces for your performances than you play at home.

**Ensemble playing:** Unlike other musicians, guitarists tend to play solo rather than in ensembles. Ensemble playing demands a different discipline. Certainly for duets and ensembles, chose pieces that are much easier than the solo pieces you may play. This is because you need to listen to one another, be aware who holds the tune and be sympathetic to one another's timing. Clearly the pulse of the music is

essential – no slowing down when your part is difficult. The pulse is the glue which holds everything together. It is difficult at first to read the music, look at the fingerboard and keep an eye on the conductor. However, with practice, it is possible to see the conductor out of the corner of your eye and only look at the fingerboard briefly when there is a change of position coming up.

**Posture:** Gary gave a postural master class to the juniors, but many comments apply equally to adults. Some performers play with their right leg tucked behind the chair. The right leg should be in front of the chair, the upper right leg stopping the guitar from sliding to one side. In fact the guitar should have 4 points of contact to keep it stable – the upper right leg, the chest, the upper left leg and the right elbow. Angle the guitar so that the machine head is level with the eyes. When rigidly fixed like this, the guitar is no longer a moving target and as such is a much easier instrument to play.

**Fingers:** Beware of playing too fast – for some strange reason this anomaly manifests itself when the player is in difficulty. Rather like a boisterous dog who takes its owner for a fast walk, pull the lead back and restrain the speed of the fingers. Remember, power comes from withholding the tempo. Beware of 'bouncing' the whole right hand when plucking strings, instead make the fingers do the work. Bouncing is wasted effort and the fingers can not be guaranteed to return to their original positions on a rebound. Try to keep the LH fingers hovering close to the fingerboard so they do not have to move so far when they are required. If a finger is weak and stands up straight, then try to involve it in the playing. A weak LH finger (such as the 4<sup>th</sup> finger) will always remain weak if it is never used. The same goes for RH fingers. Gary joked that the annular finger is so called because it is only used once per year! Beware of holding the right hand too low over the guitar, the hand should be arched. The correct finger action then should be similar to a leg kicking a ball. It was pointed out that some players have unbalanced hands in that sometimes the left hand is more advanced than the right hand and sometimes the converse is true. Exercises can help to get an equally matching set of hands.

*(Continued on page 5)*

(Continued from page 4)

**Tone Colours:** Good finger nails on the right hand are essential for guitarists. These project the sound and can give rise to tone colours. Gary and Hayley were able to demonstrate that by rotating the angle of the hand, a whole range of tone colours from thin and almost tinny to rich and mellow can be achieved. Playing tasto or ponticello enhances this 'Graphic Equaliser' even further. Always try to exaggerate any effects so they can easily be discerned by the audience. In this way vivid colours will be produced rather than dull pastel shades. Beware of playing too quietly. This is acceptable in a small room perhaps with a teacher sitting in front of you, but it will not project in a recital hall.

**Tempo:** Try to avoid losing the tempo when changing position or during a difficult section. Work on these sections and this will then set the speed for the whole piece. This may be slower than you would wish for, but at least the tempo will then be consistent.

**Bach:** Gary gave some advice on playing Bach. Rather than overwhelming the audience with a series of notes which wash over them, consider the overall direction of the piece. Treat the piece as a journey where each chord (Cm) for example represents a town (say London). The journey then travels to perhaps Manchester, then Leeds and then back to London. Look at the

overall journey and try to express all of this rather than the little footsteps taken on the journey.

**Singing:** Gary also gave some advice on singing. Clearly the key of the voice must match that of the guitar. A capo can help make the piece more fluid if the key needs to move higher. If the key wants to be lower, consider tuning the guitar down to say Db. Despite their appearance, the audience is really quite friendly and are rooting for you. Accidentally knocking over a footstool or music falling off the stand clearly proves this as the ice is broken with the audience.

**Mistakes:** Mistakes will happen. They happen to everyone, even professional players. The trick is to disguise them when they occur and to keep playing. This can be experimented with when practicing. Don't stop when a mistake occurs in practice, but quickly go to a section where you can recover. Hayley said there are a number of defences in your armoury that can help. Ideally, play from memory and let the muscle memory carry the burden. However, if the muscle memory begins to fail, involve the brain which should have been pre-programmed with the harmonies and know where the piece is going to. If that fails, try to picture the music on the page. I have known artists who relax and think through the piece - where they will place their fingers etc in the afternoon before the concert.

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## Editor's Piece

Your newsletter this time, is almost totally dedicated to the festival while it is still fresh in our minds. Furthermore the Christmas party invitations and the programme for next year and diary stickers can go out at the same time so you are aware of what treats are in store.

Thanks to everyone who made the festival a success – the helpers, participants, teachers and parents, but mostly to Sasha and Nina, without whom there would not be a festival. The Chichester Festival seems a long way away in February next year, but in fact it is only two months away and will be here in no time at all. Amanda Cook is adjudicator for the juniors on 6/7<sup>th</sup> Feb and Paul Gregory adjudicator for the seniors on 13/14<sup>th</sup> Feb.

You will see from next year's programme that we have some great names and concerts coming to the club starting with Judicael Perroy, a former

GFA winner who has also coached the last two GFA winners. We then have welcome returns to our stage of Irina Kulikova and then Graham Devine. Don't miss the final concert of the season with the Mandolinquents which is guaranteed to be a fun evening of the finest music with great humour played by a quartet of guitar (Gerald Garcia), two mandolins and a bass mandolin.

**Please support the 2 workshops to be given by Judicael and later by Graham Devine either as a spectator or in the hot seat. Much will be learnt at these sessions.**

**Stop Press 1:** At the December committee meeting, it was decided to extend our policy of free entry for under 16's to free entry for under 18's.

**Stop Press 2:** If you go to <http://www.hago.org.uk/wsgc/> you can see some clips of hago's recent performance at our club in April.

	<b>WSGC Festival Junior Class Winners 2009</b>	<b>1st</b>
1	<i>Initial Class Age 9 &amp; under (Non-competitive)</i>	All medallists
2	<i>Initial Class Age 12 &amp; under (Non competitive)</i>	All medallists
3	<i>Solo Age 13 - 18 (Non competitive)</i>	All medallists
4	<i>Solo Age 12 &amp; under I</i>	Charles Elliot/Chester Jolley
5	<i>Solo Age 12 &amp; under Grade III+</i>	Zoe Barnett
6	<i>Solo, under 15 &amp; under Grade 5</i>	Andrew Creswick
7	<i>Solo under 15, Grade VI+</i>	Ben Davies/Peter Hopkins
8	<i>Technical perfection under 12</i>	Victor Smith
9	<i>Technical perfection over 13</i>	Peter Hopkins
10	<i>Bach Class I Age 13 and under</i>	Patrick Sowden
11	<i>Bach Class age 13+</i>	Sam Brown
12	<i>Advanced Open Class</i>	Sam Brown
13	<i>Junior Recital I Age 13 &amp; under</i>	Zoe Barnett
14	<i>Junior Recital II Age 18 &amp; under</i>	Sam Brown/Adam Lack
16	<i>Guitar duet I Age 12 &amp; under</i>	Oliver Troy & Nick Hagan
24	<i>Guitar with any other instrument</i>	The Creswick Duo
25	<i>Voice &amp; guitar under 12</i>	Jacob Loveman
26	<i>Voice &amp; guitar over 13</i>	Peter Hopkins
27	<i>Junior Guitar Ensemble</i>	SAMS Elementary Guitar Ensemble
28	<i>Senior Guitar Ensemble</i>	SAMS Advanced Guitar Ensemble
29	<i>Family Ensemble</i>	Patrick & Phil Sowden

	<b>WSGC Festival Senior Class Winners 2009</b>	<b>1st</b>
50	<i>Newcomers' Class (non competitive)</i>	All medallists
51	<i>Intermediate Class I (Up to Grade III)</i>	Roy Barron
52	<i>Intermediate Class II (Up to Grade VIII)</i>	Ashley Nicholls
54	<i>Bach Class</i>	Ashley Nicholls
55	<i>Music Around the World</i>	Terry Woodgate/Ray Reddick
56	<i>Advanced Class</i>	Kathleen Standen
57	<i>Virtuoso Class</i>	Kathleen Standen
58	<i>Guitar duet</i>	Ian Burt & Debbie Burford
59	<i>Guitar Quartet</i>	Gala Quartet
60A	<i>Intermediate Guitar Ensemble</i>	Chris's Ensemble
60B	<i>Advanced Guitar ensemble</i>	Regis Guitars
64	<i>Recital Class — open</i>	Linda Kelsall-Barnett
65	<i>Arrangement Class</i>	Debbie Burford
C4	<i>Solo Guitar Composition</i>	David Roe/Samuel Stormont
C6	<i>Guitar &amp; other instrument Composition</i>	Samuel Stormont

West Dean International Guitar Festival Scholarship:

1st

Zak Habgood

Runner up

Robert Mathias

## *Behind the Scenes of the WSGF*

**A**nd so another West Sussex Guitar Festival is over. Yet again the number of entries was up on last year. There were 126 entries for the under 18 classes and 59 entries for the senior sections. However, when it is considered that there were many classes for duets and ensembles, there were a very large number of participants indeed.

All entries are welcome and we try to accommodate as many requests for Sat/Sun and morning/afternoon playing as possible. However please bear with us and try to appreciate the logistics behind organising such a festival. In a way we are victims of our own success. For a start there are nearly 200 entries to be entered into a database. The data includes name, address (and e-mail address), telephone number, class entered etc. A 4 day timetable then has to be drawn up taking into account entrants preferences. Some classes may have to be split if there are players of different abilities within a section. The timetable needs many iterations to be fine tuned. Some 200 double sided certificates with the entrants names and appointment slips then have to be printed. Trophies must be collected and programmes of the event printed.

When it is considered that there are only 4 members of the committee available to get involved in all this, it is a huge undertaking. (A committee of just 4 people to organise a club of our size is ridiculously low anyway). Although we are reasonably computer literate, we are by no means computer whiz kids. Things take us longer than perhaps they should. Unfortunately things do go wrong. This time a disk crashed on a key computer at a critical time. Fortunately we were able to call on the good services of Jez Rogers our ex-treasurer who now lives in New Zealand. He was able to produce and send files of timetables and certificates to us, but there is a 13 hour time difference between us, so sometimes Jez was asleep and sometimes we were asleep. We are all greatly indebted to Jez for his rapid response and help and cooperation in this. His reward is that while we are enduring torrential rain, gales and freezing weather, the official 1st day of summer in NZ was Dec 1st and he is loving it.

I can only apologise for the lateness of informing entrants of their times and we must ensure it does not happen again. This can only be

done by having a much earlier cut off date so that all the entries can be processed comfortably in time and adopting a contingency plan should things go wrong. I realise that with school summer holidays and half term holidays, it is difficult to get children/parents to commit themselves to taking part in an event way into the future, but other festivals insist on it. For everyone's sanity an earlier cut off date is essential.

The festival should not be considered as merely a competition. It is a chance to perform before some of the country's top guitarists and absorb their advice and criticism. Some entrants gave their first ever performance. It is an opportunity to be inspired by other playing and to meet like minded guitarists.

Thanks to Linda Kelsall-Barnett and Mitch Callow, two local guitar teachers, who have given us some valuable feedback on the festival. For the most part, I felt we ran to time better than in previous years. However, it is difficult to run like a production line and maybe the club would be all the poorer if we did. There is still room for improvement. In particular, we tend to break late for lunch with a consequential late start in the afternoon. I can assure everyone that lunch breaks are far from a leisurely affair with port and cigars! It is not always possible to run rigidly to time. Some performances and setting up last longer than the allotted time, but we will never stop anyone in mid flow. When an adjudicator spots a common fault it is worthwhile their spending some time highlighting the problem, even if we overrun on time. People like to chat to the adjudicator and this can result in a later than planned lunch, however, we are a friendly club and it is not easy to run with military precision.

It should be pointed out that all the work in running the festival is carried out on a voluntary basis. No one is paid and we all have other commitments. Some may query why having paid to enter their child in the festival, they then have to pay to watch them play and pay for a programme. The reason is that without this, the festival would lose a great deal of money. We receive grants from BTC and WSCC towards running the festival and even with these we are lucky if we run at just a small loss.

Many thanks must go to Sasha and Nina

*(Continued on page 8)*

## *Behind the Scenes of the WSGF...*

*(Continued from page 7)*

without whom there would be no festival. Special thanks must go to Jez Rogers in New Zealand for his invaluable help in producing timetables and all the necessary certificates. A great deal of work goes into the preparation of the festival, but also during the festival itself. As ever Sasha was master of ceremonies, video and stills photographer, guitar tuner and stage hand. Thanks are also due to Patrick Butcher, Debbie Burford, Barry & Vi Beckett, Julie Insull, Moyria Woodgate, Tony Poulett, Maureen

Burgen, Ian Moorey and all the others who gave so much of their time over the two very full weekends.

Any comments in running the festival and the concert are welcome especially constructive criticism (destructive criticism is less welcome!) Please let me have your thoughts and suggestions. Finally, however, please remember - to misquote ex president JF Kennedy – ‘Ask not what your club can do for you, but ask what can you do for your club’.

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## *Visit to the Granary Guitar Collection*

**T**here is a unique collection of some 40+ playable and rare guitars situated near Ware in Hertfordshire. The exhibition can be visited by personal invitation only, but visitors are allowed to play the instruments. The collection is only open on special occasions and for insurance and security reasons the exhibition is not permanent. It is believed the exhibition will be open again at some weekend in March. The date is a little

vague at the moment, and I am not sure how much notice we will be given. However, if there is interest in a group of members from the guitar club going along please let me know and we will keep you informed. It is probably better if we make our own way there and share lifts were possible. For more information see <http://www.granary-guitars.com/>

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## *Making a Classical Guitar Part 2*



*Here is the second instalment of Tony Buckwell's articles on making a classical guitar.*

### **4. Books on guitar making**

Some of the books in the following list were published many years ago but a search at [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) may unearth them. The list is by no means exhaustive nor is it an entirely recommended one. Indeed I and other luthiers would assert that several methods elaborated in a few of the books are both flawed and impractical and will inevitably lead to frustration, failure and wasted materials. I shall refer to these screw ups later.

- "Making Master Guitars" by Roy Courtnall, published by Robert Hale Ltd. ISBN 0 7090 4809 2
- "Guitarmaking" by Cumpiano & Natelson, published by Chronicle Books, ISBN 0 8118 0640 5
- "Classical Guitar Construction" by Irving Sloan, published by Omnibus Press, ISBN 0 86001 232 8
- "The Classical Guitar" Design and Construction, by Donald McLeod & Robert Welford published by The Dryad Press, ISBN 85219 077 8



- "Classic Guitar Making" by Arthur E. Overholtzer, published by Williams Tool Company, California.
- "Guitar Maker's Workshop" by Rik Middleton, published by Crowood Press, (UK), ISBN 1 86126 707 X
- "Guitar Making (Step by Step)" (steel stringed acoustic guitar) by Alex Willis, published by Fox Chapel, ISBN 1 56523 331 X

An excellent web site well worth a visit is at - [www.guitarplans.co.uk](http://www.guitarplans.co.uk) - it contains a huge source of information plus a very comprehensive links page.

Also see luthier David Merrin's varied and entertaining web site at -

- [www.davidmerringuitars.com](http://www.davidmerringuitars.com) - He is also a restorer of historical instruments and assists at the Granary Guitar Museum in Hertfordshire.

- [www.granary-guitars.com](http://www.granary-guitars.com)

Future articles in this series will cover the selection of woods and their cost, design and construction, attending a course, specialist tools required and suppliers, advice on finishings, stringing up and adjusting the playing action height and after care.

### **5. Why best quality wood is important**

High quality woods are essential for producing a good tone and because of their rarity are expensive to purchase. I recently came across one wacky web site which recommended rummaging in your local junk shop to find old wardrobes, tables or sideboards. My advice is don't bother, because even in the unlikely event of unearthing a piece of old junk which lacks worm holes, I can guarantee it will be of absolutely no use whatsoever in making a guitar.

I was reminded of a story once told me by a respected luthier when he was proudly presented with a somewhat pioneering and rather weighty category of classical looking guitar which an elderly carpenter had just completed unaided and obviously unhindered by any knowledge of music or a mastery of his own auditory senses. On being informed that "It's been entirely made from the best English Oak sire, an' the bridge is fixed on with iron bolts - jus' like one of them Admiral Lord Nelson's fine warships at Trefelger sire, so it'll last forever". To which the bemused luthier politely replied, "Unlike its sustain then?"

Only two species of softwood are used for classical guitar soundboards, either Spruce or Cedar

and each has its own special tonal qualities. European or Alpine Spruce, also known as Swiss Pine (*Picea abies*) has a bright clear tone and is obtained from trees grown at high altitude which have a short growing season and produce a very close grain. After felling it is split into planks and then seasoned for several years and slowly dried and monitored to obtain the correct moisture content before being planed down and sold for use. The grain must be absolutely straight having between 12 to 16 annular divisions per 25 mm, at around 1.5 mm apart. The end grain showing at the edge must be vertical indicating that the boards have been radially cut from the plank. A silky cross grain pattern of medullary rays will also indicate that the piece has been properly cut. A matching pair of good quality Swiss Pine boards will cost around £60 with the very best being over £120. The other softwood used for soundboards is Western Red Cedar which produces a more mellow and rounded tone. It must have similar close grain characteristics to Swiss Pine and must also have been cut and seasoned in the same ways and similarly show the satiny effect of medullary rays. A good quality pair of matched Cedar boards will cost around £35.

Hardwoods are always used for the back and sides and are selected for their acoustically reflective hardness and beauty of grain figuring. They must be seasoned for around 5 years and some are up to 20 years old. They are cut from adjoining planks which provides 'book matched' pairs giving opposite handed grain patterns when joined down the middle. Indian Rosewood is now commonly used and will cost around £66 for a set of matched back and sides. Sycamore and Maple will cost from £55 to £60. The most beautiful and highly figured timber is Rio Rosewood, also known as Jacaranda, but this is now almost impossible to obtain, however a similar variety is now available from Madagascar and will cost around £240 or more for a set. The side pieces must be perfectly flat and not warped or twisted diagonally as it is impossible to straighten them out in the bending process.

Neck blanks are either of selected straight grained Maple at around £22, Honduras Cedar (£20), Mahogany (£26), or Walnut (£36). Finger boards can be of Rosewood at around £10 for a rough blank or preferably of more durable pure black Ebony, with no white blemishes, for around £20.

*(Continued on page 10)*

## Guitar Making ...

(Continued from page 9)

### 6. Design shape influences tone quality

The amplitude of sound produced by an acoustic guitar is proportional to its internal volume and the amount of air which is set in motion inside the resonating chamber. A full sized concert guitar is a relatively large instrument. For example a Ramirez has a scale length of 663 mm, a body length of 490 mm and a lower bout width of 372 mm.

The most carefully crafted component of the guitar is its sound board because it is the most critical element in giving a beautiful tone. It must have a very close grain and will be of either cedar, which gives a warm mellow tone, or of Swiss pine which has a brighter quality. It reduces in thickness across its width from 3 mm on the bass side to about 2 mm on the treble side and have a slight upward curvature of 2 to 3 mm across the waist at the sound hole. This curvature is very important as it puts the sound board under a slight permanent tension which is critical in obtaining a pure tone.

Traditional fan strutting, first introduced by Torres, consists of seven struts, but many more arrangements are possible and every luthier has his preferred design. In several of my guitars I have introduced an additional transverse tone bar at an angle across the tops of the fan struts. Instead of traditional kerfed (cross cut and curved) linings to fix the sound board to the sides I like to use small wedge shaped tentellons, made of willow spaced about 10 mm apart. The theory is that they hold the sound board securely but discontinuously, so permitting an increased resonance around the edges. The back and sides of the guitar are made of hardwoods like rosewood, walnut, maple or sycamore. Hardwoods are used not only for their durability and beauty but in order to reflect the resonance of the table and amplify its volume. Again the back is not flat but is slightly domed, similar to the sound board and for the same reason. None of these features are likely to be found on a cheap mass produced guitar.

### 7. Just the book or attend a course

I made my first classical guitar back in 1980 having succeeded in hunting down a couple books on the subject in Foyles book shop. I fantasised

about how simple it was all going to be. Next, armed with list of supplies, I visited David Dyke's luthiers' emporium in Horam. It was dimly lit and the air was heady with the bewitching perfumes of exotic hardwoods. After much analytical scrutiny and advice from David he ardently confirmed that I indeed had an exceptionally discerning eye in the way of spruce and had just purchased the finest quality woods that I could hardly afford!

Full of confidence I started to mark out those beautiful pieces of wood laid out on the bench, assuming of course that it would all be easily achievable using just my two books. However I soon discovered that some of the methods described therein were simply impossible and subsequently had to be abandoned as unworkable - see below for some of these faux pas.

If you go it alone you must already have some woodworking skills and a familiarity with elementary tools and techniques. If you decide to attend a guitar making course (and I recommend that you do) it will save both yourself and your tutor a lot of time if you already know the difference between a tenon and a coping saw and a block plane from a rebating one.

Time availability is another important factor. Whether you attend a couple of terms of weekly evening classes or an exclusive full time course, it will absorb many hours of your time to complete your first guitar.

You must have a reasonably sized workplace which is dry and warm at all times. It must have space for a woodworking bench with a vice and an electric scroll saw (not to be confused with a hand held jig saw). I assure you that the kitchen table will soon prove to be totally useless and inadequate.

Treat your first guitar as a prototype. You are very likely to make mistakes and have setbacks to start with, as I did. There is much to learn, so start with lower cost materials to avoid expensive disappointments.

*To be continued...*

*Tony Buckwell*

If you have any comments or questions on this series of articles address them to the Editor of "Good Vibrations" who will be pleased to pass them on to Tony Buckwell.



*Regis Guitars*



*Phillip Chapman*



*Arrangers Class*



*Ashley Nicholls wins his first cup  
in his first ever festival*



*Jenny & Camilla Duet*



*Sasha Thanks Hayley*





*Gary & Debbie Burford*



*Gary meets Ian Moorey*



*Charles Elliott meets Gary*



*Gary & Antonio Maccarrone*

### *Dates for your Diary*

Dec	19th	Christmas Party	Feb	6/7th	Chichester Festival Juniors
Jan	16th	Judicael Perroy concert	Feb	13/14th	Chichester Festival Seniors
Jan	17th	Judicael Perroy workshop	Mar	13th	Irina Kulikova Concert
Jan	23rd	Club Evening	Mar	27th	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](http://www.westsussexguitar.com)

Please send contributions for the next edition of *Good Vibrations* by **18th March** to Terry Woodgate, 3, East Ave., Middleton on Sea, West Sussex PO22 6EG tel: 01243 583355 or e-mail to: [terry\\_woodgate@btinternet.com](mailto:terry_woodgate@btinternet.com)

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