

Chairman's Notes

In spite of a wet and windy Winter, members of the West Sussex Guitar Club have had a spectacular beginning to 2023, with 2 Club Evenings in January and March, the Chichester Festival for juniors on 4 February and seniors the following day, both adjudicated by



Mark Ashford. On 10 February, the Mēla Guitar Quartet gave a superb concert showing extraordinary heights of technique and togetherness in their playing; and on 1 April, the Serenata Guitar Trio of Cobie Smit, John Mills and Wendy Partridge gave 'An Evening of Celebrated Beautiful Melodies' in a friendly concert of pieces most of which were well known to the full audience. The Club's West Sussex Guitar Orchestra took part in the Portsmouth Music Festival on 12 March, led by their conductor Linda Kelsall-Barnett. The Orchestra also played on stage at Chichester's Minerva Theatre in the Chichester Festival for Music, Dance and Speech at their Showcase Concert on 26 March. Also on stage then were Sofia Carson and Vakaris Silaikis playing as a duo.

Your committee continues to work hard, dealing with issues of Gift Aid, and sponsorship, the website, organising professional concerts, publication of the Newsletters and other multifarious matters involved in the running our successful club. We look forward to our forthcoming programme of events - see below, including our Summer Party in July with the theme of "Oh I do like to be beside the seaside."

Please note, we are having our biennial visit to the **DORSET GUITAR SOCIETY on Sunday, 14 May**. This year it is being held at West Moors Memorial Hall, Ferndown, Dorset. BH22 0HZ If you are interested, please let Sasha know. It is a fun event with an all-in orchestra, and we can send you in advance, the music of the piece we are to play : The Deadwood Stage, or you can come and spectate if you prefer. Also, we hope you will attend our professional concerts, as we need your support in making these financially viable as the top players we engage, need our support.

Julian Bobak
Chairman

The MELA Quartet Recital 10 February 2023

The first concert in 2023 at the WSGC was given by the amazing Mela Guitar Quartet – Matthew Robinson, George Tarlton, Daniel Bovey, Jiva Housden. The quartet was formed in 2015 by these graduates of the Guildhall School of Music and the Royal Academy of Music. They take their name from the Sanskrit word for ‘Festival’. They have already released two



albums with a further two planned for 2023. The Quartet have given a number of concerts throughout the country and in 2019 they gave an eight concert tour in China.

The Recital Hall at the Regis School of Music was packed to capacity for the concert. The audience was well rewarded with a wide ranging programme of music not normally played on the guitar. Many of the pieces were arranged by members of the Quartet.

We were very pleased to welcome four guests for the evening. The Mayor of Bognor Regis - Councillor John Barrett and his consort - we are very grateful for the support the club receives from the Town Council. We also welcomed Ursula Watt of George Ide Solicitors and her husband who have very kindly recently become new sponsors for the club.

The recital began with Daniel Bovey's jolly and speedy arrangement of the Saint-Saens's *Bacchanale from Samson and Delilah*. From hearing the first few notes we knew we were in for an exciting evening. This was followed by George Tarlton's arrangement of Debussy's *Deux Arabesques*. A contrast to the previous piece that was prettily ornamented with harmonics. We then moved to more recent times with the suite *Opals* written by the Australian composer and guitarist Phillip Houghton. Again, lots of colour depicting light as it struck the shimmering gemstones. We even learnt something about these Black, Water and White Opals. Then we heard some incredible four part harmony in Bach's *Organ Fugue BWV 578* (popularly known as the *Little Fugue* because it is a relatively short piece). The first half of the concert finished with George Tarlton's arrangement of Glinka's overture from *Ruslan and*

Ludmilla. A very tuneful piece seemingly effortlessly played at a most enviable speed.

After the interval we all returned to our seats, eager to hear what was in store for us. The Quartet began with Holst's little known *Fugal Overture* which was also arranged by George Tarlton. This was followed by Ravel's most beautiful *Pavane Pour Une Enfante Defunte* which was arranged by Matthew Robinson. A truly moving piece of music played with much feeling. In 2019, guitarist Laura Snowdon was commissioned to write a piece for the Quartet. The result was the unusual *My Clock is Broken*. It tells the story of a clockmaker attempting to repair a broken clock. He cannot find the fault and gets more and more angry, finally experiencing a breakdown with alarming results. Then calm returns when he realises perhaps it does not matter so much after all if he cannot fix the fault. It is easy to imagine the clockmaker's workshop with a multitude of tick-tocks emanating from the four guitars. The formal concert finished with three characteristic pieces from Brazil – Milhaud's lilting *Brazileira From Scaramouche* which was arranged by Matthew Robinson, Gismonte's *Aga Y Matarazzo* and Sergio Assad's *Uarekena*.

The audience's enthusiastic applause resulted in a most amazing encore - *The Flight of the Bumblebee*. This was played at lightning speed which gave the impression of a swarm of bees buzzing around. We were let into a secret where it was explained that when it was not possible for one guitar to play so fast then two guitarists would alternate notes which then sounded like just the one instrument. This technique was also used in some of the speedier passages played earlier. Clearly much practice is required to match the speed, timbre and volume of the instruments. The guitars played were all made by the luthier Michael Gee and so they matched one another. However Matthew explained that just the week before, his guitar fell over in its case and broke its neck. Eventually it will be repaired but in the meantime another guitar was borrowed for the concert.

It was a privilege to see such talented and versatile performers and arrangers play for us more or less on our doorstep – there is no need to travel to London and pay London prices while we have the WSGC! We must hope they will soon return to our stage with their unique repertoire. In the meantime two of the members – Jiva Housden and George Tarlton will grace our stage as a duet on the 27th May. Forthcoming concerts will also feature the Serenata Guitar Trio (John Mills, Wendy Partridge, and Cobie Smit) on 1st April and a solo performance from our own Zoe Barnett on the 8th July. Make sure you note these dates in your diaries.

Terry Woodgate

More about MELA!

On Friday 10th February West Sussex Guitar Club hosted their first concert of the year at the Regis School of Music. Four young classical guitarists, forming the Mela Quartet, gave their very first performance in Sussex. The title Mela is taken from the Sanskrit word for "Festival" or "Gathering" and as the lights dimmed the audience was drawn into a vibrant, and sometimes mysterious three-dimensional world of sound, visual arts and theatre.

The programme was as broad as it was long, from the 19th Century to the Contemporary, from opera to organ fugue and from composers spanning four continents. The recital began with Bacchanale from Camille Saint-Saens "Samson and Delilah". The melody, rich in eastern spice, was tossed frantically from one player to another as the music climaxed to a violent conclusion where Samson and his foes were crushed as he destroyed the temple.

Debussy's *Deux Arabesques*, more commonly played on the piano or harp, was equally effective on the guitar. The arpeggios rose and fell, and again were shared amongst the four players as the notes celebrated the shapes in nature made by the Art Nouveau artists.

Phillip Houghton's "Opals" took us to the dry, arid landscape of Australia. Glints and sparkles of iridescent light from water and white opals and blocks of vibrant colour from black shimmered from the guitar as if the instrument were a lens.

The sparkling and exuberant overture depicting medieval knights and princesses from Glinka's opera *Ruslan and Ludmilla* closed the first half of the concert and allowed the audience to digest the musical offerings over a complimentary glass, or two, of wine or juice.

The Mela Guitar Quartet was formed after meeting at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the Royal Academy of Music. Their upwards trajectory has so far taken them to be International Guitar Festival Young Artists 2015/2016 and Park Lane Group young artists 2018/2019. As members of the audience eagerly returned to their seats there was no doubt of their delight that Mela's successful flight path had passed over Bognor Regis.

The second half commenced with *Fugal Overture* by Holst, a reimagining of the baroque contrapuntal sound found in Bach's organ Fugue BWV 578 heard earlier on.

"My Clock is broken" by British composer Laura Snowden was commissioned by the quartet in 2019 and explores the idea of trauma and acceptance. The four guitars plucked, hammered and strummed to capture the fragmentation of the mind as a repetitive single note ticked like a clock in the background. A timeless melody, reminiscent of Pink Floyd, emerged from the chaos as the healing process began.

Ravel's "Pavane pour une Infante Defunte" was originally composed for the piano and then brilliantly orchestrated. Mela's transcription almost allowed the audience to believe that four different stringed instruments were being played.

The final section of the programme took us to the sights and sounds of Brazil. The carnival atmosphere and infectious samba rhythms were felt in Milhaud's "Brazileira from *Scaramouche*". Gismonti's/Brouwer's melancholic, song-like melodies in *Agua Y Vinho* and Sergio Assad pulsating "Uarekena" brought the concert to an exciting end.

The encore of Rimsky Korsakoff's "Flight of the Bumble Bee" left us asking how they played all of the notes so quickly. You either had to be there or visit their Facebook page to learn the answer. A successful concert requires four main ingredients; an interesting programme, imaginative arrangements or transcriptions, exemplary technique and musicality that allows us to be in touch with the divine. The fifth could be a continuing applause from the audience that encourages a second encore.... maybe next time!

The combinations and permutations of sounds that Mathew Robinson, George Tarlton, Daniel Bovey and Jiva Housden can produce from the guitar is blissfully unending. We can be assured that these four fine musicians will continue to astound and inspire. For those who were not there, half of the Mela Quartet, in the form of the Housden and Tarlton Duo, will be performing for the WSGC on Saturday, May 27th. For others, they can be found on Facebook and YouTube.



WSGC would like to thank our sponsors Mayor of Bognor Regis Councillor John Barrett representing Bognor Town Council, George Ide Solicitors for their generous support and commitment and Little Florist for the beautiful flowers that adorned the stage.

Teresa Henley

Sam Brown & Irena Radić Duo concert

On Sunday afternoon of the 5th March, our music club was treated to a most excellent concert given by Sam Brown (guitar) and Irena Radić (piano).

Sam Brown is of course well known to many. He started playing the guitar as a teenager at the Regis School of Music as a pupil of Sasha Levto. He later became a graduate of the Royal College of Music where he took to the lute as well as the guitar. He then studied at the Conservatorio della Svizzera Italia with Lorenzo Micheli. He has since performed across three continents. Sam has an impressive repertoire covering many types of music and plays in a number of ensembles.

Irena Radić is an award winning pianist who also studied at the Royal College of Music. She also has a vast repertoire of pieces both solo and for many combinations of ensembles.

The programme began with Sam giving an interesting and informative introduction about Schubert. The composer was born just outside Vienna in 1797. He was initially taught the violin by his brother, the piano by his father and then, later on, composition by Salieri at the prestigious Stadtkonvikt. He was a shy, introverted man who was very short sighted. His penchant for apple strudel and his short stature earned him the nickname “Schwammer” or “Little Mushroom”.

Sam and Irena then played Schubert’s *Arpeggione Sonata in A minor D821*. The arpeggione was an instrument that was briefly popular some 200 years ago. It had six strings and was



tuned and fretted like a guitar, but had a curved bridge so that it can be bowed like a cello.. The guitar is a much quieter instrument than the piano, but Irena played most sensitively so as to balance with the sound of the much quieter guitar. This sonata is a very popular piece and the virtuoso playing from Sam & Irena

was very well received.

Irena continued the narrative on Schubert. Although he died aged just thirty one he was a remarkably prolific composer in his short life writing over 1500 works, many of which were for the piano. The size, weight, increase in pitch range compared to those built in the Eighteenth century meant that the piano was the supreme Romantic instrument. Irena recounted how Schubert really does take the performer and the listener through every emotion known to human existence. The two sets of four Impromptus were written in the last two years of his life. Irena's performance of *Impromptu no.2 in A flat major D935* completely captured the unpremeditated improvisatory style of this piano composition whilst expressing the continual shifting from light to dark moods that we all experience.

The formal concert finished with Giuliani's *Grand Concerto in A major op 30*. The three contrasting movements gave the performers the opportunity to demonstrate their versatility. Irena did an excellent job of covering for a full orchestra as the two musicians played totally together. Some two weeks after our concert Sam will be playing this concerto with the Nairobi Orchestra in Kenya. We all wish him well. We were privileged to witness a most amazing rehearsal for the concerto.

We were very fortunate that Sam and Irena had an encore piece by Bach which was a wonderful way to round off the afternoon. Irena and Sam complemented one another so well that it may be thought they have been performing as a duo for a very long time, but in fact they only got together a few weeks before the concert. Now that is truly great musicianship! Let us hope it is not so long before they return to our stage again.

Teresa Henley & Terry Woodgate



The Serenata Guitar Trio

On Saturday 1st April 'The Serenata Trio', comprising John Mills, Cobi Smit and Wendy Partridge graced the stage at the RSM. John is well known to the club as a solo performer, adjudicator and presenter of masterclasses. He performed at one of WSGC's first recitals at The Old School House in 1994. Cobi Smit is one of the most celebrated guitarists from the Netherlands and also played for the WSGC as a duo with John in 2011. Wendy Partridge is a well known classi-



cal guitarist who has provided music for theatre and television and has recently joined with John and Cobi to form the trio.

A 'serenata' is a form of secular cantata, often of a dramatic and imaginative character. In Italian, the word means 'an evening song' and the packed audience of old and new club members were privy to a truly delightful and enchanting recital of beautiful melodies from late 16th Century to the 20th Century.

The concert began with a warm and heartfelt introduction by John of the pleasure to once again be back on the stage at the Regis School of Music. John added that playing these days, for the three guitarists was purely for fun and the programme was a "bit of a dog's dinner of melodies all the way".

The first half of the programme concentrated on music from the English Renaissance, Baroque, Classical and early Romantic periods. The second half started with music by Spanish and Latin American composers and ended with well known melodies from stage and film.

The recital opened with 'Celebrated Minuet' by Luigi Boccherini followed by 'Canzonetta' from the well know opera 'Don Giovanni'. The 'Canzonetta', or popular song or ditty, was sung by the amorous Don dressed in disguise to seduce a pretty maidservant in Donna Elvira's house. Schubert's 'Moment Musicale' in F minor transcribed well from the piano to the guitar with some beautiful ponticello playing. There followed 'Chaconne & Rondo' by Henry Purcell. The melody from the 'Rondo' is to be found played by many different instruments in Benjamin Britten's 'Young Persons Guide to the Orchestra'.

John quietly receded back stage leaving Cobi and Wendy to perform three Renaissance duets; the anonymous 'Le Rossignol', 'Variations on Greensleeves' and 'My Lord Willoughby's Welcome Home' by John Dowland. The tender melody in 'Le Rossignol', or 'The Nightingale' brought tears to the eyes. John reappeared but without his cushion, then disappeared back stage to retrieve it lamenting how often he forgets it these days. Reunited with his cushion, he and Cobi played J.S. Bach's 'Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring'.

The first half of the concert ended with Vivaldi's 'Concerto in D major', often played by lutes, strings and sometimes the organ and harpsichord. John informed us that Vivaldi wrote many Concertos and that one unkind critic had erroneously, in his opinion, said they all sounded the same. The first and third Allegro movements flowed with the energy of a babbling brook, contrasting with the serene, and well known, second or 'largo' movement.

The interval allowed us all to enjoy the complimentary refreshments before we were taken to the familiar landscape of 'Recuerdos de la Alhambra' by Tarrega. We then travelled from Granada to South America starting with 'La Perigrinacion' by the Argentinian composer Ariel Ramirez. This was followed by Sambinha, which is a little Samba, by the Brazilian composer Machado and ended with the much loved 'Libertango' by the Argentinian Astor Piazzolla, where the traditional tango style shifted to 'Tango Nuevo'.

In sharp contrast, we then heard 'The Wild Mountain Thyme' a traditional Scottish song arranged, ironically, by the Welshman Daniel Jones and a beautifully sonorous 'Mothers Song' by the little heard of Japanese composer Kubota. Wendy informed us that a google search resulted in only one entry: that he was a composer and also had a pop band. However, for those fluent in Japanese there was further information at the foot of the music score.

Wendy then left the stage leaving John and Cobi to play Bob Merrill's song 'How Much is that Doggie in the window'. This was performed in the style of Giuliani or Sor with four variations and a grand finale ending with an abrupt key change.

We then entered the final furlong of the concert with music for films and shows. Clint Eastwood was a fine jazz pianist as well as actor and director. He composed 'Claudia's Theme' for the iconic film 'Unforgiven'. The plaintive melody painted the haunting image found at the film's end at the grave of a reformed outlaw's wife set against a blood red sunset sky. Scott Joplin's 'The Entertainer' gave a more humorous take on life in the Wild West, followed by 'Smoke gets in your Eyes' written by Jerome Kern, recorded in 1958 by "The Platters" and sung by Shirley Bassey in the iconic comic sketch on 'The Morecambe and Wise Show'. The programme ended with the much loved 'Harry Lyme' theme from Julian Bream's favourite film 'The Third Man' where the slightly ridiculous melody played on a zither comes into its own when fused with film.

The rapturous round of applause brought forth the first encore of Montevaggi's 'Cradle Song' adorned with the prophetic words of 'Sleep soft, sleep well, who knows what life will bring you'. The audience, greedy for more, despite a programme of twenty pieces, clapped excitedly in time to the unspoken words of 'We want more'. They were rewarded, and held spellbound, by the iconic 'Cavatina' by John Williams from the film 'The Deer Hunter'.

This was a concert of timeless melodies, melodies made great because they are simple. The arrangements by John, possibly not so simple, made them more expressive for both those who played and listened. The warm smiles, informative prologue before each piece and communicative performance enveloped and enriched all who were present at that magical concert. We cannot thank them enough!

As the three guitarists left the stage, John turned around and waved to the audience and smiled. We hope that this is 'Au Revoir ' and not a final goodbye from this wonderful Trio.

All Club members wish to extend their gratitude to Mayor John Barrett, Mayoress Carole Brett and



Bognor Regis Town Council for their loyal and consistent support. Further thanks go to our other sponsors George Ide Solicitors and Little Florist (for beautiful flowers and bouquets given to the performers). And of course to Sasha and Nina and the Regis School of Music for hosting such a wonderful evening.

West Sussex Guitar Orchestra Gala performances – Double bill!

Our new year rehearsal schedule began in earnest in January, working for two music festivals, Chichester and Portsmouth. Dedicated practising paid off and we achieved the highest categories, Honours in Portsmouth from Mark Eden and Outstanding at Chichester from Mark Ashford. We were delighted to have such good Marks.

Each festival has a Gala Concert when selected winners from each section – music, drama and dance – perform as part of a variety show. We were invited to play at both events and, luckily, enough players were available for us to participate in each.

At Portsmouth a quintet of David, Teresa, Julian, Andrew and Lucy, conducted by me, gave an excellent performance of Ballet by Praetorius and Joropo by Andrew Forrest. The acoustic was very dry and gave the impression on the stage that the sound wasn't carrying into the hall, but we were assured afterwards that everything could be heard clearly – including Julian's vital B at the end of Ballet. Lucy held the top line in Joropo with great dexterity and we all finished, and then bowed, together (due to Sasha's drilling).

The Chichester Festival Gala Concert was held at the Minerva Theatre – a special opportunity to play at this iconic venue. After defying the flying emails suggesting we should

practically camp there from breakfast onwards, for a 3.00pm performance, we all arrived after lunch for a hasty sound check – Debbie, Teresa, Lucy, Jay, David, David, Julian and myself. We were only able to rehearse the beginning and the end, but with everyone knowing Joropo so well it wasn't a problem. Playing in the Minerva surrounded by a large audience was very exciting and Sasha kindly recorded our lively performance, which is available on YouTube.

The orchestra is currently preparing for our special Festival of Chichester event, ***Guitar Soiree***, which will be at Christ Church, Chichester on Monday 19th June. This will include new repertoire from the orchestra and will also showcase junior and senior soloists and small ensembles. Please support this event – tickets are now on sale from Chichester Box Office and will also be available on the door.

Linda Kelsall-Barnett



More about Club's performance at Minerva Theatre

The Chichester Festival Gala Concert was held on 26th March at the Minerva Theatre, and the guitar orchestra was kindly invited to play. The concert showcased the best from the Chichester Festival, and it provided both talent and a huge variety of performers!

The orchestra, led by Linda, chose to play "Joropo" by Andrew Forest. It is a characterful piece of high energy, full of interesting melody lines and rhythms. Our rehearsal went smoothly and we were soon to play to a packed audience in the Minerva.

Led by the distinctive bass line, the orchestra was brought in together and the piece rolled quickly onward through slurred melody lines, complicated syncopation, and lots of punchy accents. Julian also provided some great percussion to bring out these accents.

We made our way through the rest of the piece with contrasting sections using a variety of dynamics and tones. The orchestra played wonderfully in sync throughout the whole piece led by Linda, and we were brought to a great finale and final chord at the end, which was met by an immense round of applause from the audience!

What a great concert- well done to the orchestra and thank you to those who came to support! Also a big thanks to Sasha who very kindly filmed our performance which can be found on YouTube.

Lucy Haynes

West Sussex Guitar Orchestra at Portsmouth Festival

The Portsmouth Music Festival finishes with a Gala concert, a showcase of some of the performances taking place over the last six weeks which received “Outstanding” from the adjudicator. The West Sussex Guitar Orchestra, under the leadership of Linda Kelsall-Barnett, were delighted and privileged to be invited to perform a five minute programme.

On a wet and downcast Sunday five members (Julian Bobak, David Clarke, Lucy Haynes, Teresa Henley and Andrew Richardson) arrived at the state -of -the -art theatre at Park Community School in Havant for the sound check at midday.

The concert began at 3pm and our allocated performance slot was not until after the interval. This fortuitously allowed us to time to listen to some outstanding performances given by a rock band, pianists, a harpist, violinist, and various wind instrumentalists including a nine year old recorder player. The standard of playing by these talented young musicians was staggering and many are members of the National Children's Orchestra.

Inspired by these youngsters, WSGO was determined to show that music making and performance can be enjoyed by all ages. The position of the lighting on the stage plunged the audience into an inky, faceless darkness seated in tiered rows of seats which loomed like an insurmountable mountain. Linda walked on to the stage, turned to face us, then lifted her baton and smiled. Suddenly we were ignited into action and gave a convincing performance of “Ballet” by Praetorius, and arranged by W. Love, and a spirited performance of “Joropa by” Andrew Forest. Both pieces were relatively new to us and showed signs of promise.

We all missed the presence, musically and socially, of our fellow guitarists Debbie Burford, Jay Huff, David Knight and George Robinson. However, the absence of doubling up on parts meant we each had to develop a strong sense of self-reliance, throw caution to the wind and just play more assertively and confidently to make up for absent members. Lucy Haynes successfully rose to the challenge of carrying the melody in both pieces. We think we did ourselves and Linda justice and our thanks extends to her for her tireless efforts at keeping the show going.

Teresa Henley

A huge thank you to Teresa Henley for her generous contribution to this News Letter!

COMPOSER OF THE MONTH

Julio Sagreras

Julio Salvador Sagreras was born on 22 November 1879 in Buenos Aires. Both his parents were guitarists who taught him the guitar very early - his father was Gaspar Sagreras. Julio Sagreras took part in concerts from the age of 6. At age 12, he studied piano and composition and progressed quickly, and became professor of guitar at the Acad mia de Belles Arts in 1899. In Buenos Aires, he met the editor Francisco Nu es who later published a hundred compositions of Sagreras. In 1905, he opened his own school, Academia de Guitarra. Between 1900 and 1936. Sagreras gave many concerts in concert halls and salons, and also participated in radio broadcasts. Sagreras is also known for his methodical and well-annotated guitar instruction series. It consists of seven books from the beginner to the advanced stage. The series is so well thought out and so incrementally progressive that it has often been said that the student can teach himself. In addition to Sagreras' Lecciones..., other famous works for the guitar include Maria Luisa (a mazurka), El Zorzal (Estilo), Violetas (Waltz) and the virtuosic El Colibri. Sagreras, an Argentinian guitarist, pedagogue and composer, died on 20 July 1942

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