



The Hobart Guitar Society

C/- 7 Loina Street New Town TAS 7008 Phone 03 6228 7245

Newsletter

January / February 2006

Happy New Year to everyone! Last year ended in grand fashion with the function at the Malones, and this year is starting in the same vein.

The committee is excited to announce that Anthony Garcia will be our concert and workshop artist this Spring. The concert will be on Saturday 25th March, at the Conservatorium Recital Hall, and the Workshop will be on Sunday 26th March at Newtown Primary. Clear your diaries and tell your friends – it is very important that we achieve high attendance numbers at both the Concert and the workshop.

Final details for the concert and workshop will be mailed to all members in the next few weeks.

Membership Renewals for 2006 are now due, and a renewal form is included with this newsletter.

The committee discussed raising membership fees, but decided instead to concentrate on increasing memberships. This will only work if everyone helps in whatever way they can.

Please consider who amongst your family and friends might be interested in joining our society, and give them a membership form. Extra copies of membership forms are available from the society website. Janina will also have extra forms at meetings.

As usual, the committee is working on the guest list for our regular meetings, with some very exciting possibilities in the pipeline. Watch this space!

Our first guest presenter will be David Malone, talking about ensemble playing, sight reading, and playing generally. This will provide a great kick start to our year – don't miss it!

Chris Young

Next Guitar Society meeting is
Sunday 5th February 2.00pm
Newtown Primary School

David Malone will be talking generally about ensemble playing, sight reading and playing generally and doing some work on these areas with the Guitar Orchestra.

The Hobart Guitar Society

The aims of the Society are to promote, encourage and support classical and other styles of acoustic guitar music (such as flamenco, contemporary, jazz) throughout the Hobart region through the Guitar Orchestra, regular monthly meetings of society members, workshops, master classes and concerts. The Society also welcomes players of Lute and similar early music instruments.

Membership of the Society is open to all people who enjoy guitar music. You do not need to be a player to join the society.

Committee Members

Bert Somssich
Brendan Bannister (Librarian)
Chris Young (Treasurer & Newsletter Editor)
Janina Oost (Orchestra Co-ordinator)
Joe Bugden
Peter Cross
Sandro Decleva
Vincent Howe

Assisted by

David Malone (Orchestra Conductor)
David Wood (Web Site Manager)
Maria Malone (Newsletter Assistant)

Guitar Society Contact Details

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or visit the Hobart Guitar Society website
<http://www.hobartguitarsociety.org>



HGS Library

All members of the Hobart Guitar Society are entitled to borrow items from the Library. The loan term is one month – from one meeting date to the next.

Members may borrow up to 2 items at a time. All Library items will be at society meetings where you will be able to borrow and return items you borrowed the previous month.

The Library now holds almost 300 titles.

Upcoming Guitar Society Events

- 5th February First meeting for 2006
2:00 pm Newtown Primary.
David Malone will talk on ensemble playing, sight reading and playing generally. David will work on these areas with the Orchestra
- 5th March 2:00 pm Newtown Primary
Orchestra Rehearsal
- 25th March Anthony Garcia Concert
Conservatorium Concert Hall
- 26th March Anthony Garcia Workshop
Newtown Primary

Would you like to be a member of the Hobart Guitar Society Orchestra?



Then contact Janina
on 6228 7245.

Favourite Guitar Websites

Buying strings on the world wide web

Regular browser of the web will be aware that string prices in the US are substantially cheaper than Australian prices. Until recently, web vendors have not been able to accept orders for delivery outside the US.

This is changing – check out

<http://www.stringsandbeyond.com/>

or

<http://www.stringitup.com/>

Xmas Bar B Que

Many thanks to David, Alexander and Maria Malone for hosting a wonderful end of year gathering for HGS members.

The RSVP's rolled in, the large Bar-b-que called for, and the Malone household was overrun by upwards of 40 HGS members and families who all enjoyed the food and bon ami of the occasion. Thanks to Nick Young for providing the "happy snaps".



David



Alexander



Maria



Bert and Joe



Graham Brown looking serious



Alan Brown looking more serious



Janina



Don



There were many children



Paul



Kamilla's Mum and Sue



Kamilla

The terrific end of year gathering was rounded off with a small presentation to David Malone to thank him for his work with the Guitar Orchestra. A rectangular yellow floral tray, and a small metallic cup left behind after the BBQ maybe claimed from David Malone on 5th Feb

Five Steamy Days in Sydney or My Time at the Sydney Guitar Society Summer School, January 2006.

By David Wood

Actually I really did have five steamy days in Sydney. Fortunately the temperature only got into the high 20's. Unfortunately the humidity was 85%+. The summer school is a well organised annual event put on for the last ten years by the Sydney Classical Guitar Society. If you've never been to one it's worth going. This year's dates were 11-15 January, and over the course of the five days there were plenty of opportunities for ensemble playing, workshops, masterclasses, concerts, chatting with new friends and of course the summer school orchestra where all participants join together into a mammoth guitar ensemble. For people who live outside of Sydney the society organises billeting with society members for a very small fee, which makes the five days very affordable.

I believe this year was the summer school's biggest so far, with 81 participants attending. The guest artist-in-residence was Czech guitarist Pavel Steidl. Mr Steidl, who specialises (although not exclusively) in early 19th century works by composers such as Paganini, Mertz and Giuliani, has an extraordinary technical and interpretive mastery of the guitar, and is said by many to be one of the greatest living guitarists. If you haven't heard him play before, rush out and buy a CD. You can also check him out on the web at www.pavelsteidl.com.

"What am I going to write about the summer school?" I've been thinking. Well since I kept a diary of sorts, I thought I might as well replay an abridged version of events here for you. So here goes...

Tuesday 10 January

Drove to Launceston to catch my flight to Sydney (direct thankfully – nothing worse than hanging around Melbourne airport for hours!). After collecting my bag and guitar (still in one piece), headed to the underground train station for my ride into the city. Got off at Town Hall station and made for the office of my billet (Paul). Dropped off my kit and hit the town for some shopping. Made it back to Paul's office for 5.00pm after which we drove to his place in his (air-conditioned) car. (This was my first chance to get to know Paul and his family and I think

I can say that after the five days we have become firm friends).

Wednesday 11 January

The standard summer school day starts at 9:25am and runs until 4:30pm, with an hour for lunch plus morning and afternoon tea. We arrived at the venue (Ascham Girls' School) slightly late thanks to Sydney traffic. Paul assures me that the traffic this week is fairly light due to many people still away on holidays. *Mental note: I think they must all be in Tassie, judging by the number of NSW number plates around home!*

After the intro we head off to our allocated ensemble groups, of between 10-12 people plus instructor. Our instructor was the very friendly and easy going Daniel McKay (of Guitar Trek fame.) Turns out that our two pieces are the *Pavane Op.50* by Gabriel Faure and *No. 4 Impromptu (Allegro)* by Australian composer Phillip Houghton. Hmm... the Houghton piece is going to be a struggle. My sight reading is not great by any means.

Alan Bull, the summer school's luthier-in-residence gave a post morning-tea lecture about guitar construction (focussing on his guitars in particular). He brought along three guitars, one of which was particularly interesting with a hybrid sound board made of both spruce and cedar. The Sydney Guitar Trio played some pieces to demonstrate the guitars. Very nice!



Maestro Pavel Steidl demonstrating an exercise.

Following lunch (bought at nearby Edgecliff shopping centre) was the first masterclass by

Five Steamy Days in Sydney or My Time at the Sydney Guitar Society Summer School, January 2006.

Pavel Steidl. Three students performed for him in turn and had their respective techniques, fingernails and interpretation carefully honed by Pavel with his bevy of suggested exercises. It was so good I took three pages of notes! So much to do; so little time...

Afternoon tea and then into one of the two orchestras for rehearsal. The orchestra names (Christmas and Grenfell) were a little cryptic until I realised that we were playing the *Blue Suite* by our own Maria Grenfell. Did I say the Houghton piece was a test for my sight reading? This is going to be tough. I think I've got the blues.

Thursday 12 January

Straight into the ensemble work today. Must be getting used to the music as the notes are starting to come together. The ensemble sounds okay, but we definitely need some work before we're supposed to perform this thing on Sunday!

Another two players at the Steidl masterclass and another two pages of notes. I need to learn shorthand!

My DrizaBone hat seems to have attained minor-celebrity status at the summer school, since Pavel Steidl noticed it. He told me he loves Australian hats (he already has an Akubra) and needs a DrizaBone hat to go with the coat he bought last time he was in Australia. I believe the summer school organisers are going to try to get him one as a gift. They even tried to offer me money for mine! It is well worn-in I must admit.

This afternoon is the first summer school concert. Today a performance by Canberra School of Music graduate, Harold Gretton. What an outstanding display of music – both aurally and visually. The 1988 work, *Sequenza XI* by Luciano Berio was the piece that stood out. To be honest, I can't really think of words to describe it. If you ever get a chance to listen to it, you might know what I mean!

Orchestra rehearsal and then home.

Friday 13 January

The now routine ensemble practice and masterclass fill the morning. Two more

pages of notes. Have I got enough pens to last me to the end of the summer school? Between lunch and orchestra practice I thought I might mix it up today, so went to half a masterclass by Daniel McKay and then found a hidey-hole for some private practice (that Grenfell piece!).

After orchestra, everyone heads down to a wood-fired pizza restaurant in Double Bay for the traditional pre-concert dinner. With 81 attendees this year the restaurant is packed with guitarists out for a good time, however the meal is short and sweet as it's back to the school for the main concert at 7:30pm, by Pavel Steidl. Another fabulous display of virtuosity, with pieces ranging from Bach to Paganini (love 'em) and finishing off with a mesmerising piece by Mr Steidl himself (*And you go to Ithaca too*).

Saturday 14 January

Started today with a refreshing early morning walk with my host, Paul. I think our ensemble is really starting to come together now. We've organised who will be doing the cueing for the start, the ritenutos and rallentandos, so most of the music is even in time now! Three more pages of masterclass notes this morning. Phew.

The composition competition performance was held this afternoon, where composers submit a piece for guitar ensemble. The finalists' and winner's pieces were played.

Sunday 15 January

Last ensemble practice before the final concert this afternoon. I think our pieces sound as good as they're going to get with just five days from go to whoa. With more time we could be a tight little group!

I'm just about guitar-ed out today. The rest of the morning and after lunch is given over to free performance in the main theatre. I felt like some space, so found my quiet corner (under the tennis courts!) and did a few hours of practice.

Final orchestra practice this afternoon, with Pavel Steidl conducting. I think Maria's *Blue Suite* has brushed up pretty well although with more time it could have been perfect!

*Five Steamy Days in Sydney or
My Time at the Sydney Guitar Society Summer School, January 2006*

5:30 pm and the summer school grand finale concert is the culmination of the five days' hard work. Each of the ensembles played their pieces well. A first for me – I decided it was a waste of time to let my nerves get the better of my playing. So when it was our turn I just got stuck in and enjoyed it! It felt great too!

Both Grenfell and Christmas orchestras played our respective pieces and then joined together into an 81 piece rendition of *La Cumparsita* by Rodriguez. Surprise, surprise, at the end of the performances the organising committee presented Pavel with a DrizaBone hat!



The 'Christmas' orchestra conducted by Richard Charlton.

A self tuning guitar ???

Tuning a guitar can take a few minutes, with a perfect result sometimes illusive. The Transformance self-tuning guitar takes less than a second to lock into perfect tune. While most guitars will only ever see standard tuning (EADGBE), a good proportion of popular music is played with alternate tunings. Just as each guitar sounds different, musicians will change the tune of a guitar to create the sound they require and that's one of the reasons you often see a dozen or more guitars on stage at a rock concert. The Transformance guitar has the additional advantage of being able to change from one custom tuning to another (it holds 240 custom tunings) which can be selected from the face of the guitar or toggled with a foot pedal.

The self-tuning guitar mechanism is naturally enough controlled by a computer, which is mounted inside the guitar. Almost any guitar can be fitted with the system, though Fender Stratocasters, Telecasters and Gibson Les Pauls seem to be the most prolific. The cost is in excess of US\$3000. The makers claim that having the system fitted will not change the sound, tone or feel of a guitar, as the self-tuning aspects are entirely separate from the audio system of the guitar, keeping the pickup and audio the same.

<http://www.Transformance.com> has all the details, including video footage showing how useful the instant tuning can be, with video endorsements, video examples of the benefits offered by the system, and a technical rundown on how it works. In essence, the bridge and tailpiece are replaced, and circuitry and motors for each string are fitted to the guitar. There is no mention of a system for acoustic guitars, but I reckon that's only a matter of time. Check it out!

Who is that Guitarist? - Francisco Tarrega

1852 - 1909

Francisco Tarrega-Eixea was born in Villareal, on 21st of November 1852, in a house beside the Saint Paschal Baylon sanctuary where both his parents worked as housekeepers.

Little Francisco one day fell into an irrigation channel, causing permanent injury to his eyes. Thinking that he could lose his sight, the family moved to Castellon in order that the boy could learn to play an instrument - a skill that could afford a living to a blind person. Indeed a blind musician, Eugeni Ruiz, was Tarrega's first teacher. Then another, Manuel Gonzalez, also known as "El cego de la Marina" initiated him into the Guitar.

In 1862, an established concert player Julian Arcas played in Castellon and had a chance to hear the child Francisco playing. Suitably impressed Arcas advised his father to bring him to Barcelona to further his music studies. Tarrega duly went, but soon he left his relatives' house where he was staying and joined a group of young musicians, playing in pubs and cafeterias to earn some money instead of going to the music school. When his father learnt of this he brought Tarrega back home.

Tarrega, who also played the more popular piano (at this time the guitar was largely relegated to accompanying songs) got a job as a pianist at a local Casino, while still trying to develop his guitar playing. A rich businessman, Antonio Canesa, paid for Tarrega to visit the Spanish Music Conservatory and this is where he acquired his first Antonio Torres guitar, Torres being the grandfather of modern guitar construction.

At the Spanish Music Conservatory his teacher Arrieta saw Tarrega's great affinity for the guitar; after a concert, he embraced Tarrega and said to him: "Guitar needs you, and you were born for her". Tarrega left his piano career and focused exclusively on his preferred instrument.

His fame grew and in 1881 he went to France, playing in Lyon and Paris and later

continuing his tour to London. Then Tarrega returned to Spain to marry Maria Rizo.

The couple then moved to Madrid and on to Barcelona, with Tarrega making frequent tours in Perpignan (France), Cadiz (Spain), Nice (France), Mallorca (Spain), Paris and then Valencia, where he met a benefactor Conxa Martinez, a rich widow who provided him and his family a house in Sant Gervasi (Barcelona). It is there that Tarrega composed most of his most famous masterpieces.



Unsatisfied with his sound, in around 1902 Tarrega shortened his nails back to the flesh to get a sweeter tone.

He continued to give great concerts, travelling to Bilbao in Spain, Geneva, Milan, Florence, Naples and Rome in Italy, making many friends and fans.

However, in January 1906 a stroke paralysed the left side of his body. He recovered slowly and was in considerable pain. The long illness exhausted the family's funds, although his friends provided support in arranging a series of fundraising concerts.

Tarrega recovered and started to tour again, but then in Picanya he composed his last work, "Oremus", dated 2nd December 1909. On 3rd December he felt ill and returned to Barcelona, staying at his house at Valencia Street until the 15th December 1909 in the early morning, when he died.