



The Hobart Guitar Society Newsletter

May / June 2005

The last couple of months have been a busy time for our Society.

The meeting with Neil Laughlin was a great success, with the small group in attendance being given an insight into how Neil assesses guitars. The hand out from this meeting is included in this issue, as I feel it will prove an invaluable resource for anyone buying a guitar.

The Alan Banks weekend was also an outstanding success. Workshop participants all learnt something and had fun, and the concert at Runnymede confirmed to all that Alan is an extraordinary talent, and a great ambassador for the Classical Guitar!

We had a "flying" visit to the Conservatorium by Italian Maestro and 19th century specialist Marco Battaglia, who performed a free concert and Masterclass. It is a great pity that the Italian Consulate gave the Con almost no notice of the visit, and that it was impossible to publicise the event efficiently.

There is something we should all be concerned about – not all memberships have been

renewed, leading to reduced funds available to the Society. The Alan Banks workshop and concert were not as well attended as the committee had hoped, leading to a small financial loss to the Society.

The inevitable result of lower memberships and low attendance at events such as the Alan Banks workshop and concert will be the inability of the Society to stage future events.

Luckily, the solution to these financial problems is simple – we just need to all support these events. If all current Society members had attended the concert and brought one guest each, the concert would have sold out and the weekend would have been a great financial success, enabling the Society to further promote, encourage and support Classical Guitar!

Thanks to David, JET, Rob, Sue, Janina and Nick for your contributions to this Newsletter.

Chris Young

Next meeting is Sunday 5th June 2.30pm at Newtown Primary School - Guitar Orchestra Rehearsal

This rehearsal will be primarily on the new music with recorders by Gabrielli and Guami which Don will post out prior to the rehearsal.

The workshop on Saturday 2nd July from 2:00pm – 4:00pm at St Johns Church New Town will be a concert rehearsal with the recorder ensemble plus our repertoire from the Tsunami Concert.

The concert on Sunday 3rd July with the recorder ensemble will start at 2:00pm at St Johns Church New Town.

It has been a hectic time for Guitar Society members recently - what with our performance in the Town Hall and now this. But you can all look forward to a having a bit of rest after the 3rd of July as there are no more scheduled performances for the Society for a while. (Rest those tired fingers!)

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

President	David Malone
Vice President	Bert Somssich
Secretary & Memberships	Peter Cross
Treasurer	Sue King
Newsletter Editor	Chris Young
Newsletter Assistant	Maria Malone
Librarian	Brendan Bannister
Assistant Librarian	Vincent Howe
Publicity and Promotion	Sandro Decleva
Publicity Distribution	Scott Swanson
Web Site Manager	Richard Pinferi
Guitar Orchestra Co-ordinator	Don King
Guitar Orchestra Conductor	David Malone

Guitar Society Contact Details

C/- 45 Quayle Street, Sandy Bay. TAS 7005
Telephone 61 3 6224-8060
Email waiata@tassie.net.au
or visit the Hobart Guitar Society website
<http://home.iprimus.com.au/rpinferi/hobartguitarsociety/>



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 June 2:30pm - 4:30pm New Town Primary School - Guitar Orchestra rehearsal.
- 17th June Gareth Koch at QVM Inveresk
Tickets \$20 phone 6323 3666.
- 2nd July Workshop (concert rehearsal)
2:00pm to 4:00pm. St Johns Church New Town - with the Hobart Recorder Ensemble.
- 3rd July Concert 2:00pm. St Johns Church New Town - with the Hobart Recorder Ensemble.

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



**Then contact Don King
on 6224-8060.**

Favourite Guitar Websites

Guitar Loot (Ancient Manuscripts Plundered)

<http://homepage.mac.com/pogmoor/GuitarLoot/>

Eric Crouch's site contains solo arrangements for Classical Guitar of Renaissance and Baroque Music, mostly written for Lute, with notes about the music and transcriptions of some of the lute sources. The music files are free; all are available in pdf format and some also in Scorch format. Eric says his main purpose is to make available music that he hasn't found published elsewhere



Neil Laughlin's

"Hierarchy of assessing/testing/adjusting a guitar".



Those who attended the meeting on 3rd April were treated to a fascinating discussion with Neil Laughlin, who shared with us his method of assessing/testing/adjusting a guitar.

Neil's tips are reprinted here with his permission.

1 Basic look & feel of the instrument: Do you like the look & feel of the instrument – does it suit you? Unless you feel comfortable with an instrument, you won't get the best out of the partnership between instrument and performer.

2 General integrity of instrument: Look for cracks in panels, warping and distortion of soundboard, lifting behind bridge area, hollows in front of bridge, gaps between bridge and soundboard surface, neck/body joint, cracks and repairs around headstock, cracked machine head rollers. Gently tap around edges of back and soundboard with knuckle to detect rattles from loose braces or glue joints. Look along the whole length of underside of fretboard for cracks in glue joints. Check finish for wear & cracking.

3 Frets: Gently pull strings aside from fret positions and look for wear underneath; press fret ends with fingernail end to look for loose springing ends.

4 Tune: Check for concert (or desired) pitch.

5 Relief in neck: Check by first lightly fretting bass E string at both 1st & 12th frets and noting clearance between bottom of string and top of 5th and 6th frets. (a ball-park figure here would be around 0.25 – 0.5 mm.) Next, while still holding at the first fret, slide the finger at the 12th fret up to the last fret and note whether there is an appreciable increase in the gap at the 5th & 6th frets. Ideally there should be only a slight increase (say 0.2mm max) if any; too much and this means you could have a problem with either a swollen soundboard or poor neck joint. Repeat this process on the other strings, noting any anomalies that could show a warped or twisted neck.

6 Action at nut: Fret strings in front of 2nd fret, and look for a very slight clearance over 1st fret. This should be barely visible, but detectable by tapping down on the string at the 1st fret and hearing a slight "ping" as the string makes contact. Between 0.05mm at

the top E, and 0.25mm on the low E are good lines. No clearance over the 1st fret means the danger of buzzing when playing open strings; too much clearance can cause uncomfortable playing action and in worst cases, notes pulling sharp over the first few frets.

7 Action at the saddle: Measure height between top of 12th fret and bottom of strings – look for between 2.5 – 3mm at top E, 3-4.5mm at bottom E (some players prefer higher settings than this for greater volume).

8 Harmonics: Compare harmonic note at 12th fret with fretted note – fretted note sharp, string length too short, fretted note flat, string length too long. N.B – strings can vary considerably here; always try another string before taking any other action.

9 Playability and tone: carefully play each string from open position right up the neck, checking for ease of fretting, smooth fret ends, consistency in tone, and cleanness of notes.

10 Buzzing of strings and poor tone quality is the most common complaint, and can be caused by a number of problems:

- ♪ On open notes only – check for nut action and groove shaping
- ♪ All over fretboard on all strings – check saddle shape and height, rising fretboard past 12th fret.
- ♪ As above, but not at nut – nut too high, saddle too low.
- ♪ Over first few frets only – neck too straight, or convex.
- ♪ On specific frets and strings at random positions – worn, loose or uneven frets, faulty strings
- ♪ From around 5th fret upwards; rising fretboard past 12th fret, or too much relief in neck.
- ♪ On specific notes – can be caused by loose bracing, cracks or poor glue joints

Alan Banks Workshop

By David Malone

I thought the workshop was a success and I suspect the length and amount of content was about right. One of the participants at the concert that night thought that much more would have been too much!

The highlight for me was the wonderful playing in the masterclass and Alan's insightful comments. Alan had been impressed with the standard at the Conservatorium masterclass on Friday but I think the range of ages and abilities made the workshop class even more enlightening.

Camilla and Jessie were very polished and musical.



Tom's Bach was well thought out with excellent understanding.



Nick's performance was extremely convincing on both Friday and Saturday



and David surprised everyone with the speed and detail in his Barrios.



This was a tremendous masterclass in that it showcased many of the skills that make for exciting performances and allowed the audience to share in the process of improving on them.

The Pilates session with Phil had left us feeling limber in the morning and Don's rhythm class took advantage of this with some African and calypso strumming and tapping.



Alan got everyone to improvise melodic lines in the afternoon and my session with the guitar orchestra brought us all together for a mini-concert to wrap up the day.

Many thanks to Alison and Leah for their kind generosity in opening their home and to Janina who looked after us during the workshop with food and drink. A big thank you also to Sue and Don and Chris for their behind the scenes organisation. It was a great day and the perfect warm-up for Alan's concert at Runnymede.



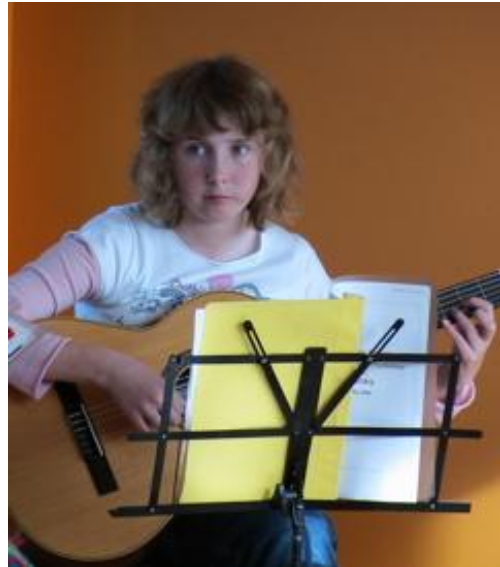
Alan Banks Workshop

By Jessie Turner (AKA JET)

I played in the master class with Alan Banks - I played a grade 3 piece called Dark Eyes. I was a little bit nervous but not much. Alan was friendly and helpful. He gave me a couple of good tips. One was to personalise the piece a bit more. That made sense to me.

I liked all of the workshop, but could have coped with more strenuous exercises to start the day.

The food was nice. It was funny when lunch came and everyone was standing around the table staring at the plate of sandwiches that were all neatly arranged in a circle pattern. No one was doing anything so I took a sandwich and that broke the ice...then everyone else dived in!



Alan Banks Concert

The historic "Runnymede" made a superb setting for a very pleasant Classical Guitar recital by Alan Banks. The music room had excellent acoustics and Alan was able to enjoy an intimacy with the audience that other larger venues don't allow. His interaction with the audience with explanations of the pieces he was playing was excellent and, to a novice like my self, very enlightening. I am sure that the more experienced fans of the classical guitar were

not disappointed with his personalised recital. He exuded his passion for the classical guitar and he didn't hold back when explaining new or different presentations of otherwise familiar pieces. I think that Runnymede will be popular for similar recitals in the future as it offers an intimacy that classical guitar enthusiasts seem to thrive on.

By Rob Williams

Alan Banks' concert demonstrated a level of virtuosity rarely seen in Tasmania. Allan is a technical wizard - his playing showed a really good grip on the guitar. As well as the purely technical aspects of his playing, his emphasis on ideas, emotions and expression really shone through in his playing. He emphasised volume and tone changes to good effect and his playing was always exciting.

His modernist pieces were a highlight and had a great "fun" feel to them.

The one thing that was very evident in Allan's playing, was that he really enjoyed playing. Allan Banks is obviously a man who loves playing the guitar and this passion is conveyed in his playing. He gave a brilliant concert that held everyone riveted.

By Nick Young

Marco Battaglia Concert & Masterclass

Made possible by the Italian Embassy, in conjunction with the Italian Institute of Culture and the Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music, Italian Maestro Marco Battaglia performed a concert and Masterclass at the Conservatorium concert hall on Friday 13th and Saturday 14th May.

Marco Battaglia was born in 1969 in Milan where his high school studies were concentrated in the classics. He studied law and philosophy at the State University. On top of all this, he dedicated himself to the guitar, carrying out his training at the Civic School of Music. In 1995 he graduated from the Conservatory and went on to specialize in the interpretation of 19th century music paying close attention to matters of performance practice. He participated in several courses using original instruments of the 1800's and is an esteemed interpreter of Classical and Romantic period sources



utilizing period guitars of major luthiers like Fabricatore and Filano, which are part of his private collection.

Guitar Society members Nick Young and David Wood were the beneficiaries of the Masterclass. Nick played a Sor study, and David a Giuliani piece. Lots of discussion then ensued as to how best to play the pieces, in particular in interpreting how the composer intended the piece to sound.

Marco finished off by giving us some insights into his specialist topic of 19th century interpretations. He handed out lots of examples, although unfortunately all in French or Italian.

Marco and his father were then introduced to some genuine Australian culture at Bonorong Park, courtesy of David Malone.



Tsunami Benefit concert at the Hobart Town Hall with the Orpheus Choir, Bel Canto singers, and others

An enthusiastic audience of over 130 were treated to a wonderful afternoon of music on Sunday 22nd of May. Hosted by ABC Newsreader Peter Gee, the afternoon featured choral music from the Orpheus Choir, the Bel Canto singers, baritone Christopher Richardson, a trumpet trio, a piano, violin and cello trio, and our very own Guitar Orchestra.

The contribution from our Guitar Orchestra was warmly received. Well done to everyone for bringing guitar music to a very wide audience, many of whom had not heard a Guitar Orchestra before.



Who is that Guitarist? - Gareth Koch

Guitar virtuoso Gareth Koch balances a busy performing career as a solo and chamber artist, and as a member of Saffire – the Australian Guitar Quartet. He is Head of Plucked Strings and Lecturer in Guitar at the Conservatorium of Music in Newcastle, and holds a PhD in Music.

Gareth was born into a family rich in artistic expression. His father Christopher Koch, author of "The Year of Living Dangerously", is an Australian literary legend and his mother Irena Vilnonis was an accomplished pianist who studied alongside Roger Woodward at the Sydney Conservatorium.



But it was itinerant gypsy musicians in Andalucia, Spain, who inspired and tutored 12 year old Gareth in Flamenco guitar, setting him on a path to become one of Australia's greatest ever guitarists, renowned for both his classical and flamenco playing. *"These flamenco guitar gods were playing from the heart and making me feel something I hadn't experienced before. I needed to be a part of it,"* says Gareth.

He spent his teen years in Launceston playing many styles of guitar, but particularly throwing himself into rock music. His band Ignition played the heavily electric guitar-driven music of groups like Deep Purple, Jimi Hendrix and The Angels. More significantly, the band offered opportunities for free beer and meeting girls. *"Ah, the power of the guitar."*

He left the band behind to take up a scholarship to study classical guitar in Sydney. In fact, he was *"packed off kicking*

and screaming" by his parents, he recalls. *"I wasn't inspired or committed at the time",* he says, *"and I was thrown out after six months. A year playing in the rock world and mixing with the wrong crowd helped me realise the error of my ways, I begged the Conservatory of Music to take me back and, thankfully, they did. And so I began training, with much dedication, which would pave the way for my career as a musician."*

In the mid-80s Gareth headed to Europe for post-graduate studies in Vienna. *"I had one bag, some dirty socks and a one way ticket"* says Gareth, *"and I ended up staying in Europe for ten years."* The lowest point in his career came when he was employed to play for tourists in the palaces of Vienna, dressed as Mozart. *"They only paid about \$25 a throw and made me buy my own white stockings,"* says Gareth. *"I was fired for refusing to wear Mozart's wig after finding out how infrequently it was dry cleaned. Palace authorities caught me performing without it and that was the end of the gig. A blessing really!"*

"Arriving in Madrid, I found myself in a very different environment. It was much more friendly and much less formal than Vienna" says Gareth. *"My teacher was a big chain smoking Spaniard, and under his guidance I took up smoking lethal cigarettes with no filter. One of the bi-products was that your voice dropped two octaves and you had no appetite for food. This was great, because I was too poor to buy food!"* he adds.

"I lived in a tiny room that had no window, just a wash basin and a bed. It soon became a huge problem that I couldn't practise during the siesta – people would beat on the walls. Luckily, I got to know a nearby guitar builder who would let me practise in the basement where he varnished the instruments. I spent the year high on varnish fumes, chain smoking, speaking deeply and not eating. Despite this, my flamenco playing reached new levels during my time in Madrid".

The musical influences in Gareth's life are many. Music and musicians he cites includes the Bach cantatas, Queen, Bella, country music, Fleetwood Mac, AC/DC (*"the Machinehead album is never far from the player"*). He has recently rediscovered Roxy Music and the early music of The Church. *"I*

Who is that Guitarist? - Gareth Koch cont.

am currently loving the new album by Slava Grigorian and Al Slavik, and a recording of Schubert songs by tenor Christopher Pregardien with Andreas Staier on fortepiano," adds Gareth. "I must say that I regard Handel as the greatest pop composer ever. He wrote great tunes with good hooks, fantastic choruses and great driving rhythms."

Being a versatile guitarist necessitates owning a range of instruments. Gareth has a dobro, a six string classical (the V8 of guitars), an 8 string classical, a flamenco and a 1820 Viennese instrument found in a second hand shop in Vienna for about \$300. "What a find," enthuses Gareth. "I was fortunate they weren't aware of its true value."

Gareth is about to embark on a national tour featuring music from his recently released CD Collection, "The Art of Gareth Koch". This is a boxed set of 4 CD's, covering an astounding range of music, showcasing Gareth's great versatility and career to date. Include is an album of medieval music, a CD of Celtic, Spanish and Australian folksongs and ballads, a collection of Spanish and classical guitar music, and Gareth's incredible solo guitar version of Carmina Burana.

Gareth will be at the Queen Vic Museum and Art Gallery at the Inveresk rail yards in Launceston on Friday June 17th. Tickets @ \$20.00 available by phoning 6323 3666.

Definition of a Gentleman -Someone who can play the piano-accordion - but doesn't!! (Thanks Janina for this little gem)

Tuning tips

Thomas Mace, in his seventeenth century book "Musicke's Monument," suggests that to tune a lute, tension the top string until it nearly breaks, then tune the rest to that. He also advises "to keep the lute under the bedclothes for best protection, but to beware, on returning home in one's cups, from the tavern, with a doxy...". Sound advice indeed.



A unique CD collection of Australian compositions for Guitar Ensemble

The Sydney Classical Guitar Society has released "FrEternity", a unique CD collection of Australian compositions for guitar ensemble featuring the music of Charlton, Keane, Houghton and others.

Order forms are available at
<http://www.classicalguitarsydney.org.au>

Guitar For Sale



Dieter Hopf
Conservatory model

European Spruce
Soundboard

East Indian
Rosewood
back and sides.

Comes with a hard case.

Just over one year old.

\$1200.00

Phone Don King 03 6224 8060

Membership Renewals

For those of you who have forgotten to renew, this is another reminder.

For those of you that may know of people who are interested in joining, please put them in contact with Sue.

Guitar Society Contact Details

C/- 45 Quayle Street, Sandy Bay. TAS
7005
Telephone 61 3 6224-8060
Email waiata@tassie.net.au

