



The Hobart Guitar Society

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

Newsletter

September / October 2005

It has been a busy time for the Society's Committee over the last couple of months, the results of which are detailed in this Newsletter.

We have a new website packed with features including a forum where people can post ideas and feedback. Please support this by participating in the discussions and telling everyone what you think.

The Treasurer's report herein contains reassuring news that the Society is viable, but warns of the dangers of continuing with low membership numbers. There are quite a few members yet to pay their 2005 subscriptions – you know who you are! Please pop a cheque in the mail to the Society's new mailing address

If anyone knows of people who might be interested in joining our Society, please give them the membership form included with this Newsletter.

Chris Young



Next meeting is Sunday 2nd October
2.00pm at Newtown Primary

Special Guest Graham Brown with his
Swiss Army Knife approach to Jazz

Noted jazz educator Graham Brown originally hails from Canberra where he studied jazz guitar with Dave Kain and Mike Price and classical guitar with Tim Kain. Graham completed a Bachelor of Education at the University of Canberra and later went on to teach Music, English and Media Studies in ACT matriculation colleges including Dixon College and Lake Tuggeranong college. He and his wife Trish moved to Tasmania in 1997 and Graham started teaching contemporary guitar at the Conservatorium in 1998. Graham and Trish are the founders of mediaRare; one of Hobart's most successful multi-media development companies. See them at <http://www.mediarare.com.au/>.

After afternoon tea, the Guitar Society Orchestra will rehearse. Orchestra members unable to attend please contact Janina on 6228 7245

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

C/- 7 Loina St New Town TAS 7008
Telephone 61 3 6228 7245

Email info@hobartguitarsociety.org
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

- 2nd October Newtown Primary School.
Monthly meeting and Guitar
Orchestra Rehearsal
**Special Guest Graham
Brown**
- 6th Nov Newtown Primary School.
Monthly meeting and Guitar
Orchestra Rehearsal
- 26th Nov Saturday Xmas concert with
the Hobart Orpheus Choir
- 4th December Newtown Primary School.
Monthly meeting and Guitar
Orchestra Rehearsal

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



**Then contact Janina
on 6228 7245.**

Favourite Guitar Websites

www://hobartguitarsociety.org

The Hobart Guitar Society website has been upgraded and expanded by David Wood, based on the original site by Richard Pinferi.

A new web-site address, current news and an archive of Newsletters.

Also on the site is a forum, where visitors to the site can post questions and comments. Just follow the link on the Home page.

It is hoped that this forum will generate discussion and ideas. Let us know what you think by posting a message.

Society Meetings on 7th August and 4th September with

Special Guest Nigel Coates

Nigel Coates and partner Fiona Stewart dropped in to the August meeting to provide us with some wonderful playing and singing as a prelude to their concert at St David's Cathedral the following Friday. Members were so impressed with Nigel that he was invited to attend our next meeting as our special guest speaker.

A number of members attended the concert at the Cathedral, and were enchanted and delighted at the music. One voice, one guitar, where classical, folk, blues and jazz worlds meet! It's a great shame that in mid winter the Cathedral is pretty much the coldest place in Hobart – notwithstanding this the concert was a great success!



At the September meeting, Nigel gave a talk on his relationship with the guitar over the years, in particular comparing Classical and Jazz styles.

Nigel feels that Classical guitar is a very solitary and technical instrument. He found he could play all sorts of technical stuff, but felt he did not understand the music to the extent that he would like. On the other hand, jazz playing allows him to “speak” the music, expressing who he is. Classical playing is the pursuit of perfection, where jazz is not so much concerned with perfection as having a good time and expressing yourself.



Nigel went on to explain that if you have technical capacity, technique becomes less important, and rhythm, tension and hearing become important in producing something beautiful. He also commented that the older and more experienced he gets, the less competent he feels – the more he realizes how little he knows.

All in all, some fascinating insights from a very accomplished and committed player, backed up with some marvellous playing, including some Bach, and some improvisation.

Now here's a thought!

A small item for cogitation while you're waiting for the sprouts to boil, or you're left with the Q and Z at the end of Scrabble. Fabio Zanon has been quoted as saying: “Life is too short to play second or third rate music.” Which set me to thinking as to who is actually qualified to classify music as second or third rate? One man's meat, etc. In a similar way to beauty, music is in the ear of the beholder, is it not? Which is just as well, or we'd all be listening to the same thing, and the animated musical discussions between aficionados would be non-existent. How many 'rates' are there? If there are 100 of them then 'second rate' would be pretty good, huh? What do you think? Post your thoughts on the Web site forum.

Guitar Society Future Directions

At the meeting held on Sunday 7th of August, discussions were held on the make-up of the Guitar Society Committee, and how best to go forward. Don and Sue King have decided to take a back seat in the running of the Society, so a discussion was held as how best to fill the not inconsiderable void! All agreed that Don and Sue had done a magnificent job in getting us to where we are, and that the now well established Society has a great future.

David Malone will not renew his role as President, enabling him to concentrate his energies on his role as Orchestra Conductor/Musical Director.

As a result of these discussions, a committee meeting was held the following Tuesday, attended by Janina, Vincent, Brendan, Sandro, Chris and Bert. This proved to be a very productive and positive meeting, with many issues raised and discussed. A further meeting was held on 13th September, attended by Janina, Vincent, Brendan, Peter, Chris and Bert.

The Committee:

It was decided that the committee would meet as necessary. Organization should remain flexible and open to new ideas. There will be no President or Vice-President, rather the workload will be shared as necessary amongst the committee. It was also recognized that many members who were not on the committee would be more than happy to assist when required (concerts, workshops etc).

Essential roles will be filled by the following people:

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| Orchestra Conductor | David Malone |
| Orchestra Co-ordinator | Janina Oost |
| Librarian | Brendan Bannister |
| Treasurer | Chris Young |
| Newsletter Editor | Chris Young |
| Newsletter Assistant | Maria Malone |
| Web site Manager | David Wood |



Society Contact details

Mailing Address Hobart Guitar Society
C/- 7 Loina Street
Newtown TAS 7008
Phone 03 6228 4275
E-Mail info@hobartguitarsociety.org

This e-mail address can be used for all contact – Janina will receive these e-mails and forward them where appropriate.

Newsletter

The Guitar Society Newsletter will continue to be sent in hard copy. Could members who would prefer electronic copies please e-mail the Society.

Meeting/Rehearsal Format

With the success of the orchestra, members of the committee felt that there had developed an overemphasis on orchestral rehearsal to the detriment of other activities ie. guest speakers & guest & member performances. Rather than have more meetings and rehearsals it was decided to trial a new format. Meetings will start at 2.00 pm with 1 hour guest speaker/performer including questions discussion time, half hour of refreshments and informal time for member 'performance', followed by 1 hour rehearsal for orchestra development. When the orchestra has a concert coming up then extra rehearsals could be organized. Members and guests could then stay for all or part of the meeting/rehearsal. There would be more focus on playing and interaction.

This format was trialled at the 4th September meeting with positive responses.

Memberships

The Society currently has 22 paid up members plus another half dozen or so active members who have overlooked their 2005 membership fees. (No doubt these fees will be paid in due course!) On a per capita basis, this makes us a very strong society, however, as the treasurers report highlights, a return to the membership numbers achieved in the Society's first year is highly desirable.

Guitar Society Future Directions (cont)

All members can help with new memberships, and a membership form is included with this newsletter. Members will all have friends or contacts that are potential members – let's all have a think about who we might be able to introduce to the Society!

Treasurers report

The Society is in a solid financial position, and is viable going forward with current membership numbers. An increase in membership numbers (back to year 1 numbers), is highly desirable. With even a small increase in membership numbers, membership fees at current levels will be adequate to ensure on-going financial viability.

2003/2004 year

The Society achieved a surplus of \$467.30. This result largely due to strong membership receipts. Concerts and Workshops achieved their targeted break even points due strong attendance receipts.

2004/2005 year

The Society achieved a surplus of \$74.27. This result held down compared to year 1 by substantially reduced memberships receipts, and a small loss on Concerts and Workshops caused by low attendance receipts.

Web Site

The Hobart Guitar Society web site has been upgraded and expanded by David Wood, following on from the excellent work done by Richard in getting a web site up and running for us.

The new web-site address is www.hobartguitarsociety.org

New features include downloadable copies of past Newsletters, and a forum where people may post questions and comments. It is hoped that this forum will generate discussion and ideas. The committee would love to receive feedback and suggestions from members, and this forum is an ideal way of achieving this. Let us know what you think.

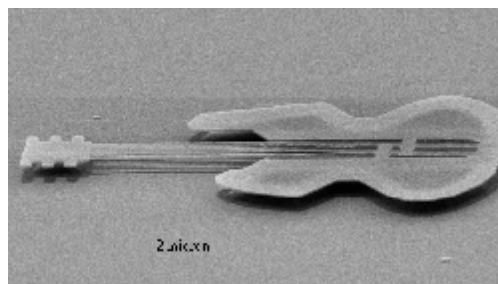
Guitar Orchestra Performances

The committee will pursue suitable performance opportunities, as it is felt that the Orchestra is now well established, and is becoming known in the wider community. In the new year, the committee will explore the possibility of arts and/or community funding for the Orchestra.

In the mean time, the committee has accepted an invitation from The Orpheus Choir to perform at their Christmas concert on Saturday 26th November. Repertoire etc will be discussed at the next meeting on October 2nd.

Now see this!

The smallest guitar in the world is 10 micrometres long - about the size of a single cell - with 6 strings each about 50 nanometers, or 100 atoms wide. It was made by Harold Graighead and Dustin Carr of Cornell University, New York in 1997, from crystalline silicon, and is based on a Fender Stratocaster.



A Guitar History

Compiled by Chris Young

The following is a collection of bits and pieces of information I have stumbled on whilst trawling the web.

The earliest guitars doubled as weapons - small hunting bows, which served double duty as a "twanged" instruments when held over the mouth of the hunter, which in turn served as a resonating cavity, their skulls serving as soundboards. This is apparently still being played today as the okongao or cora in certain parts of Africa, and is said to produce glorious boinging and doinging sounds.

Skipping forward a few thousand years, to pre-Homeric Greece, we come to the Greek god, Apollo, the god of archers. The fact that he was (is?) the God of music, and was also portrayed with a bow, is thought not to be a coincidence. Apollo also figures prominently in early guitar history. In one myth, Hermes climbs out of his cradle to steal the cattle of Apollo; on his way home with the stolen cows Hermes kills a turtle, cuts out the bottom part of the shell, stretches leather over it, shoves some sticks into the head- and tail-hole, with cow-gut stretched between the sticks, and starts playing away. Apollo heard the music, and found Hermes with the stolen cattle. According to legend, Apollo agrees not to kill Hermes in return for the new turtle-shell guitar.

Other early guitars include chords strung over turtle shells, wires on clay pots, strings over wooden bowls in various shapes, or even melons.

When did the so called modern guitar first take shape? The history of what we call the guitar begins at the point where the form of the instrument takes on the shape of a woman's body: softly rounded at the shoulders, curving inward at the waist, and concluding with another gently rounded curve at the bottom. This allusion appears frequently in guitar history. For example, Luc Dominique, the singing nun, describes the feminine psychology of the guitar when she sang "I would like to be like a guitar with a singing heart...like a guitar which you can fill with your song".

Another less politically correct statement relating guitars to the feminine mystique comes from Spain - "La mujuer y la guitarra,

para usarlas hay que temparlas" says an old Spanish proverb (To use a woman or a guitar one must know how to tune them). In one ancient sculpture, the bowstring of Apollo Argyrotoxos ("of the silver bow") is stretched out over the vibrant body of a woman. It gets better (worse?) ... according to Segovia, "The guitar was invented when Apollo tried to rape Daphne - he embraced her, Daphne was changed into a laurel, and from the wood of the sacred tree the first guitar was made".

Instruments similar to the guitar were invented in various countries at different times over the centuries. The ancestors of modern guitars developed in Europe alongside lute-like instruments (with their curved backs). Nobody seems to know for sure who the direct ancestors are, though it included the chetarah of the Assyrians, the kinnura of the Hebrews, the qitra of the Chaldeans, the sitar of the Persians, and the kithara of the Greeks. In 711 AD, the Moors who invaded Spain brought with them a stringed instrument called the rebec. Gypsies wandering west from Persia and, in the 12th Century, Crusaders returning from the east to Europe, brought early versions of the lute and the vihuela. From these instruments, the start of experimentation leading up to the 'modern classical' began.

Plucked instruments came in a variety of sizes, usually very small, for portability. Many of the early guitars look more like ukuleles than guitars. But over time a number of definite features began to emerge that led to the "modern" guitar (whatever that is!).

There is a suggestion that for many centuries the guitar or its relatives were among the most popular instruments in the world. During the 1600's, it was customary to keep a guitar hanging in a barbershop so that customers could strum away the time until it was their turn for a shave or haircut.

A demise in popularity of the guitar among Europe's aristocracy came with the introduction of the grand piano. The musical range of both instruments is comparable and both can accompany themselves in canonic form or melody/bass lines. But the louder sound of the piano, its relative ease of mastery and its impressive physical size made it the instrument of choice in the mid 1800s. Fortunately, the peasants couldn't

afford these new developments. As a result, the guitar was seen as a poor man's orchestra for many years.

Features of older guitars not generally found in today's instruments include;

- ♪ The earliest "guitars" (something we'd recognize as a guitar) could have had as few as 3 and as many as 20 strings. I am not clear why we've settled on six, and why the tuning developed as it has.
- ♪ Today's guitars have a single set of 6 individual strings. Until the late 1700's, serious musicians played guitars with "drone" strings that reinforced the tone of the instrument. Interestingly, their main problem was one of keeping the drone strings in tune with the plucked string. With only single strings, the instrument could be tuned in half the time!
- ♪ The interior of today's guitars are very different to early instruments. Early struts were designed only to keep the soundboard straight and prevent the neck from pulling forward. They did not serve to distribute the vibrations from the bridge uniformly across the instrument, which rounds out the bass sound, and enhances the volume across all frequencies.
- ♪ Modern guitars have one circular, open hole. Earlier instruments were much more ornate, with multiple rosettes (a grid like pattern carved within a circular or oval shape) in various positions on the soundboard.
- ♪ Our modern bridge includes a saddle to distribute the vibration of the bridge across a broader length of the soundboard. For centuries, the bridge was just a simple slate of wood that the strings were tied to; it was narrower, and, in comparison to

modern instruments, didn't cause the soundboard to vibrate with the same sensitivity to the plucked strings.

- ♪ Modern instruments are tuned with polished metal gears on an open gear-box. Until the mid-1800's, pegging arrangements, like a violin or cello use, were employed. While the guitar has advanced to the system we now use, with its obvious mechanical advantages and ease of adjustment for strings in tension, it's interesting to ask why instruments in the violin family continue to use the old prone-to-sticking or -slipping peg system.
- ♪ Frets on modern instruments are fixed. The alternative? Try tying gut frets at the approximate location for the correct notes. The number of such frets during earlier times ranged from 9 to 17.
- ♪ Finally, modern classical guitars are finished with lacquers, varnishes or french polishing, with ornamentation around the sound-hole. Older instruments were incredibly ornate, not just in their final painting (which no doubt affected the sound), but in the shape of the body, the fingerboard and peghead.

The one name that comes up again and again in the design of the modern guitar is Antonio de Torres Jurado (1817-92). Following the advice of Fernando Sor and Dionisio Aguado, Torres developed lighter instruments, using thinner wood for the back, ribs and top. He set the vibrating length of the string at 65 cm. He refined the interior bracing to get a better vibration pattern from the soundboard. He increased the body size and width of the neck to facilitate easier chord development. Indeed, most guitars made today have many similarities to the instruments made by Antonio Torres in 1850.

References:

- Berkowitz C. 3000 years of Classical Guitar History 1997 <http://www.3-cities.com/%7Ecgstc/history.html>
- Grunfeld, F. V. The Art and Times of the Guitar, Macmillan Co. 1969.
- Guitar Salon International. 'A Brief History of the Guitar' on the homepage of the Guitar Salon International.
- Parkening, C. and J. Marshall. The Christopher Parkening Guitar Method, Vol. 1
- Sloane, I. Classic Guitar Construction, E. P. Dutton & Co. 1966.
- Turnbull, H. The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Ed. by Stanley Sadie .
- Tyler, J., The Early Guitar: a history and handbook, Music Dept., Oxford University Press. 1980.

Who is that Luthier? - Lance Litchfield

By Bert Somssich

Queensland based Luthier Lance Litchfield was in Hobart recently (on his honeymoon!) and brought two of his guitars to try out - both modern construction design, one with a cedar top, the other spruce. Paul van Emmerik, David Malone & Bert Somssich played them and were very impressed. (Paul liked the spruce, David the cedar top and Bert could easily have kept one of each!) If you are after

a new guitar Lance aims to produce instruments which have sound characteristics somewhere between the Smallman and Marty guitars. He also makes two versions of flamenco guitars. His website is worth a visit <http://www.litchfieldguitars.com/> - Lance is an extremely knowledgeable and committed craftsman. His guitars sell for about \$6000 at the moment.

Musical Notes

Thanks again Janina - keep them coming

C, E-flat, and G go into a bar. The bartender says: "Sorry, but we don't serve minors." So the E-flat leaves, and the C and the G have an open fifth between them. After a few drinks, the fifth is diminished and the G is out flat. An F comes in and tries to augment the situation, but is not sharp enough.

D comes into the bar and heads straight for the bathroom saying, "Excuse me. I'll just be a second." Then an A comes into the bar, but the bartender is not convinced that this relative of C is not a minor.

Then the bartender notices a B-flat hiding at the end of the bar and exclaims, "Get out now. You're the seventh minor I've found in this bar tonight."

The E-flat, not easily deflated, comes back to the bar the next night in a 3-piece suit with nicely shined shoes. The bartender (who used to have a nice corporate job until his company downsized) says, "You're looking

sharp tonight, come on in! This could be a major development."

This proves to be the case, as the E-flat takes off the suit, and everything else, and stands there au natural.

Eventually, the C sobers up, and realizes in horror that he's under a rest. The C is brought to trial, is found guilty of contributing to the diminution of a minor, and is sentenced to 10 years of DS without Coda at an upscale correctional facility. On appeal, however, the C is found innocent of any wrongdoing, even accidental, and that all accusations to the contrary are bassless.

The bartender decides, however, that since he's only had tenor so patrons, and the soprano in the bathroom, everything has become all too much treble; he needs a rest, and closes the bar.

Are Banjos to music what Etch-A-Sketch is to art?

Q: What's the difference between a banjo player and a blind javelin thrower?

A: *you don't have to be very good to get people's attention.*

Q: What is the difference between a flute and a banjo?

A: *the flute won't burn.*

Banjo player: "When I die, I want to leave the world a better place."

Guitarist: "Don't worry, you will."

Q: What's the best way to tune a banjo?

A: *with wire cutters*

And just to prove we can also laugh at ourselves... a guitarist was found crying 5 minutes before the start of his concert. He said a friend had detuned one of his strings. When asked why that was such a problem he replied, "He won't tell me which string he detuned!"