

Chairman's Notes

In spite of the past 16 months or so of Covid-19 restrictions, the Club has kept buoyant, and has had a most unusual yet inspiring period. During those months, your committee has kept the club very active, and created as many events as we would have done in normal circumstances. Moreover, our video recordings continued to offer our members and visitors to the website the opportunity to revisit most of the events. Our members have gained valuable experience in recording and distance communication. Since our last Newsletter in February, we have had 4 virtual events, the first being a Club Evening on 6 March, and then a meeting with the Dorset Classical Guitar Society on 16 May. Also, we had a professional recital by Vida Quartet on 24 April which was watched by over 500 visitors at our new website, far more than the Recital Hall could manage. Our most recent event was an exciting Composers' Festival on 13 June, when members played pieces by Gary Ryan and Vincent Lindsey-Clark, who also invigilated their respective pieces on Zoom, and gave helpful comments on



the performances. This was an innovation for the Club, and generally, it is difficult to imagine what we would have done during the pandemic without the facility of zoom, and the expertise of our Artistic Director, Sasha, in putting all these events together. The Committee thanks everyone who contributed to our video performances, and also those who contributed to raising funds for our two professional events. We very much depend on our members to contribute to newsletters, with articles, pictures, news, comments or suggestions, and please send them to me at jgbobak@btinternet.com.

On Saturday 31 July, we had our first live meeting in the Hall which was our SUMMER PARTY, with the theme of 'Bring me Sunshine', tentatively attended by about 25, with many performances, including Guitar Harmony and West Sussex Guitar Club orchestra. We hope that all members will gain confidence to attend our future events in the Hall and put the past behind us!

Julian Bobak, Chairman

The Interview - Amanda Cook, guitarist

Recorded in the garden of the ruined church of St Martin's, Chichester

AM Hello Amanda! Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed for the WSGC newsletter Good Vibrations. Your lively and accessible interaction with the School, spanning many years from your first enrolment as Sasha's pupil aged 7 to your latest virtual performance with Vida, has provided us with a unique insight into the development of an international artiste which has taken place before our very eyes! So, Amanda, how did you come to engage with Sasha and the guitar in the first place?

AC Well, I started when I was 7 and I had a lot

of interest in the guitar at home: we had many classical guitar records that I enjoyed listening to and my Dad used to play guitar in a band in the 60's in London and around Hertfordshire where he grew up. He had a guitar at home so he taught me a few tunes. And then I said I'd like to have lessons when I was living in Westergate - and by chance there was a boy in my primary school who was already learning with



Sasha so that's how the link was made. I was incredibly lucky because Sasha was such a good classical player – people come to the guitar from all sorts of angles and sometimes they have to alter their electric guitar technique if they want to change to classical – quite complicated. I was very lucky to start with a fantastic teacher!

I'm sure many parents would be interested to know if you were a model pupil - you always give the impression you'd be enthusiastic and compliant in every respect!.....

- **You'll have to ask Sasha that!**
- but were there times when you had to make adjustments between your commitment to your school work and your loyalty to your guitar studies?

When I was growing up, I definitely did go through periods when I didn't practice as regularly as I should have - I think my mum particularly helped me to keep focused, encouraging me to organise my practice because it can be difficult. As I grew up I began to understand how important the guitar was to me which helped me to commit to the time that you need to invest.

Did you imagine that you would become a professional guitarist at that time?

No, I suppose that was when I was in my mid-teens

(Pause for pigeons tugging at branches above energetically and somewhat distractingly!)

I think it wasn't until I went to the Royal College of Music Junior Department on Saturdays when I was 14. I stopped my lessons with Sasha and went to Charles (Ramirez) and it was inspiring to be surrounded by so many talented musicians. Then, going to West Dean when I was 15 helped me to see playing the guitar as a possible career.

And then you got a scholarship and changed to being a full-time student at the RCM, interestingly with teachers who Sam Brown later studied with. Do you still call it an undergraduate degree?

Yes, a B Mus undergraduate degree, which was 4 years.

Followed by a Masters?

No, I didn't want to go straight to another college and wanted to try a few different paths instead. I got some funding from the Countess of Munster Trust and went to New York for two months and studied there with Ben Verdery, who is a tutor at Yale University; and I also went on a week's intensive course with David Russell in Italy. I had a lot of private lessons at that time with Fabio Zanon in London. I'd met him in the club and also at the Festival in West Dean.

You've had so many interesting experiences !.....
Let's talk about your CD, 'Debut' -

Well I was 24, and as it was my first solo CD I

wanted to replicate the feeling of a recital. I decided not to focus on one period of music or one composer and just picked some of the favourite pieces that I'd been playing in concerts to create a balanced and contrasting programme. I knew that I definitely wanted to include, 'This Morning in Omagh the Sun Rose Again' by Bill (William Lovelady)

- how did your link with William Lovelady come about? -

.....Well, Bill and I became friends after meeting at several guitar concerts in London. Then after the Omagh bombing in 1997 he was asked to write a piece for the first anniversary and we went to Omagh and I played at 2 memorial services. Regarding my other CD choices - Ben Verdery was a big inspiration to me. I loved the freshness and originality of his music; while David Russell was a huge influence back then and I was really inspired by his recording of the Mertz – 'Fantaisie Hongroise' - so I decided to include that with some Dowland, which I love, and some lesser known works by Torroba.

And the CD was recorded in Pagham, wasn't it?

Yes, in the church of St Thomas a Becket.

Since 'Debut' your biography has been lengthened by the many friendly connections you have formed with individual artistes and groups too numerous to name! Do you seek out these associations or have they, as it seems, occurred naturally in your career – in duos, for example, guitar & harpsichord or guitar & soprano voice.

Some of the ensembles have been with friends and others through various introductions. But I think it is always important to work with people that you have a shared approach to music-making, so the process is positive and inspiring. For example with 'Appassionata' – the trio I formed with Hayley and Rebecca, who I first met when we were teenagers at West Dean and stayed friends since then, so to play together, travel and make music with them was great fun.

So could we look briefly at your very productive association with Meg Hamilton, with whom you launched the Amici Concerts. These have extended the range of onstage presentation from classical excellence into areas little explored in Chichester festivals – Turkish folk music, Romanian laments, free improvisation and jazz, flamenco, South American groups, klezmer. The way you have staged all presentations has been exuberant and infectious, bringing a much-needed internationalism into the scene. Did Amici have defined aims in this direction?

Yes, we have always been focused on bringing

musicians to Chichester that excel in their field and that we felt would excite audiences and, at times, bring performances that had not been heard in Chichester before. It's always exciting to see audiences react to music that they may not have heard before. We have recently had our first Amici concert since the pandemic and the audience were so thrilled to be at a live music event again!

In a brief interview of this kind, there are so many aspects of your colourful and creative career that it's impossible to include, Amanda. I'd like to mention your wonderful rapport with children, sharing the joy of music rather than the more formal aspects of exams and competitions; your work with the Bach to Baby concerts; and the time you and other guitarists associated with the WSGC freely devote to charity performances - but here there's only space to come full circle to your new and exciting role in the Vida Quartet with Mark Ashford and Eden-Stell. Can you outline how this association developed?

Well, the guitar world is very small and over the years of us all studying in London and seeing each other at concerts and summer schools like West Dean and the Bath Guitar Festival we became friends. They are a few years older than me, so as a student I remember always looking up to them as musicians because of the wonderful concerts they gave!

And when were you first invited to play in the Quartet? That must have been an enormous uplift!

I joined Vida at the end of 2014. I feel very lucky to play in the quartet. We work really well together and have a lot of fun performing music that you often would never hear on the guitar.

It's no surprise that any performance in the School of Music by you, Amanda, is a sell-out! You have such a large and devoted support group, delighting not only in the wonderfully sensitive and uplifting music that flows from your guitar, but in the warm and generous atmosphere that you and those you play with create both locally and internationally. With the greatest appreciation of the WSGC to you and to those you play with, Amanda - in particular our long-time friends in Vida.

(Amanda) Thank you! I myself and so many other guitarists are grateful to Sasha and the club for the many performance opportunities we have all had. It is special to have that ongoing relationship and to be able to come back and see the new generation of musicians at the Festivals as time unfolds.

Angela MacTavish

Membership Matters

Since the last newsletter, we have welcomed three new members to the Club, Peter Slowe from Angmering, Nigel Crawley from Littlehampton, and Tom Freeman from Midhurst. We look forward to meeting them soon,



when we are able at last to get together again.

The majority of members have continued to support the Club by maintaining their membership through the pandemic, and participating in the online events that replaced our usual live events. As a result, we currently have a healthy membership of 96, 21 of which are Family Memberships, which will include at least two members. So there are at least 117 of us enjoying the benefits of belonging to the Club.

The Club's year is nearing an end, and memberships will be due for renewal on September 1st, for everyone except those who have joined the Club since January 1st 2021, whose memberships will automatically be carried over for another year. Many of our members renew by standing order, which saves our hard-working committee a lot of work, but if you prefer not to renew by standing order, then please try to deal promptly with your renewal form when it comes through your letter-box in August: it's so easy to put it to one side, thinking it's not due for a couple of weeks, and then forget all about it in the hurly-burly of everyday life.

Baz Boxall

Membership Secretary

New Members

We extend a very warm welcome to:

Peter Slowe Angmering

Nigel Crawley Littlehampton

Tom Freeman Midhurst

***We hope you enjoy many happy events
at the Club!***

Chichester Festival for Music, Dance and Speech 2021

Despite a lockdown lasting over a year the WSGC has held a number of virtual events thanks to digital technology and, of course, thanks to Sasha who has held the club together in these difficult times. We have had two virtual parties, a virtual club evening, a virtual AGM, a virtual concert, a virtual guitar friendly with the Dorset Guitar Society and now a virtual Guitar Festival as part of the Chichester Festival. This was the 66th Chichester Festival (established in 1955). Many sections of the Festival were cancelled, but thanks to the enthusiasm of Sasha, it was possible to hold the guitar section this year. Entrants submitted video clips of themselves playing and Sasha coordinated the event via the Zoom software package. Chris Stell, a long standing friend of the WSGC, was the live adjudicator. In addition to teaching guitar at the Royal College of Music, Chris is internationally renowned as a member of the Vida Quartet and as one half of the Eden and Stell Duo. The Guitar Festival comprised eleven classes with thirty entries for the Juniors and five classes with six entries for the Seniors. Throughout the day, the audience numbered up to twenty. In the afternoon, we were privileged to be joined by Jenifer Pressdee, the chairman of the Chichester Festival. Obviously, spectators and performers were considerably down in numbers on a live festival but this was to be expected on our first ever virtual Festival. Some members may have been put off by the technology, but there is no need for this. One merely clicks on the link provided by Sasha and is taken into the Zoom event. It then just remains to mute your microphone so any conversation does not interfere with the proceedings, then sit back and enjoy in the comfort of your home. There was the occasional hiccup in running the event, but thanks to Sasha these were quickly overcome. All bodes well for our future virtual events, but of course the hope is that eventually we will soon be able to return to live events once again at our wonderful recital hall.

Chris was very encouraging to all who participated. He congratulated everyone who played before the camera. He said he found it far more difficult to play before a camera rather than a live audience. To improve technique, he warned against pulling the strings upwards which when released can cause the strings to slap on the fingerboard. He found that those playing from memory rather than from music had more of an authority in their performance. When playing a study, ask yourself what is the purpose of the study. For example is it an arpeggio study, or does it require a bold bass presence etc. Studies that

require a busy left and right hand may be better tackled by playing block chords with the right hand until the left hand becomes established. Then introduce the right hand arpeggios to the study. Chris sympathised that the guitar is a very difficult instrument to play and said that even a very simple tune can present many challenges if it is to be played well.

We must thank Sasha for organising the Guitar Festival, Chris for his adjudicating, and everyone else who contributed towards the event such as the performers, camera crew, teachers and parents. We all know how Sasha multitasks at a live event, but I suspect it is more stressful managing a virtual event such as this. Even when the event is over Sasha still has to collect all the adjudicator's comments and paste them onto the Festival certificates. Many thanks to Sasha who has turned 'difficult times' into 'digital times'. It was a most enjoyable day and reminded us all of the sorely missed live festival events.

Terry Woodgate

	Junior section	1st
801	<i>Solo Novice</i>	Genevieve Binskin/ Max Gayle
802	<i>Solo Beginner</i>	Theo Nichols
805	<i>Solo to grade IV</i>	Cody Dunning
807	<i>Guitar Solo</i>	Sofia Carson
808	<i>Junior Bach Class</i>	Cody Dunning
810	<i>Guitar Solo Open</i>	Seth Swain
811	<i>Junior Recital Class</i>	Seth Morgan
812	<i>Intermediate Recital Class</i>	Ben Ward
813	<i>Advanced Recital Class</i>	Maya Solly
814	<i>Tech Perf Class 1</i>	James Connolly
815	<i>Tech Perf Class 2</i>	Sofia Carson

	Senior Section	1st
818	<i>Solo Int I</i>	Harri Goldsmith
819	<i>Solo Int II</i>	Leigh Boyle
821	<i>Solo Advanced Amateur</i>	David Clarke
822	<i>Solo Bach Open</i>	David Roe
823	<i>Solo Recital Open</i>	Linda Kelsall- Barnett

Donations

On 24th April, in place of a live concert, we were able to watch a video recital by the Vida Quartet – a virtuosic concert of solo, duet and quartet pieces, available to view for two months on YouTube via our website. As Treasurer, on behalf of the Committee, I'd like to thank all the members, and non-members, who made a donation towards the event. The final tally was £473.56, paid by cheque, direct bank transfer and PayPal, enabling the club to offset the cost of hosting this very successful and enjoyable performance. It seems, with the current lifting of restrictions we are able to have live recitals at the club again! If not, we will be pleased to receive donations for future recorded recitals in lieu of selling tickets on the door. Thanks and best wishes.



David Clarke Treasurer

Composers' Festival

Summer 2021 began optimistically with a successful vaccination programme gaining momentum and all restrictions to be lifted by 21st June. However, the rapid transmission of the Delta variant of Covid delayed this by four weeks, delivering yet another hammer blow to live music and theatre.



Fuelled by the need to sustain Club members' interest a Virtual Composers' Festival was held by Zoom. Guitar music written by two well known and respected composers Gary Ryan and Vincent Lindsey-Clark was selected as the repertoire. Participants were to submit videos of their performances and the two composers were to adjudicate and announce the winners of each class live by Zoom.

The invitation to participate was sent precariously close to the submission date for the videos. However 7 juniors and 8 seniors bravely ran the gauntlet, prepared their pieces in time for the deadline and listened to their performances and detailed feedback on a blisteringly hot day in June.

The festival opened with the Junior followed by the Senior section performing compositions by Vincent Lindsey-Clark. Hazel Swain began with

"Rio by Night", a gentle Bossa Nova with no bar chords. She played a beautifully well sustained melody and Vincent pointed her to The Girl from Ipanema as a guide to feeling that soft rhythm.

Ben Ford then played Shadow of the Moon, inspired by the total eclipse of the sun seen in Cornwall in 1999. This was played with good control in tempo. Vincent demonstrated the dryness of tone produced when plucking the strings by the bridge (ponticello) compared to the sweeter tone when plucked further over the frets (tasto).

Vakaris Silaikis then played the popular piece "Tango esta Noche". Vincent highlighted the need to contrast the strident rhythmic sections with the sonorous melody and how to avoid slapping the bass notes in the "Bartok pizzicato" style. Vakaris's spirited and convincing performance won him first prize although the decision was a close call.

The adult section began with Teresa Henley playing Icy Blue, often overshadowed by the better known Steely Blue. The gentle rhythm was fitting to the Blues style but the first and last section begged for some accented punctuation as a contrast. Julian Bobak gave another interpretation of Tango esta Noche, again capturing the style of the piece. Vincent suggested using the metronome to hold the tempo in check.

Leigh Boyle then followed with Sonata Scarlatta, a piece written in the style of Scarlatti, heralded for his harpsichord compositions. Her performance had a sparkling positive energy sprinkled with appropriate staccatos but needing the odd dash of accentuating the offbeat. David Clarke gave a relaxed and flowing performance of the Mountains of Mourne, based on a letter written to a distant lover, but tinged with the longing of home.

The winner was Jay Huff's with dazzling performance of "Pulsar". The pulsating rigid tempo of his sound captured the visual bursts of emission of light, and projected him to the star position of first place.

There followed 8 performances of pieces composed by Gary Ryan. The dissonant and evocative "Spice Trail" was selected by Darcy Marey de la Cruz and Robbie Cartwright. Darcy gave a confidently projected performance with a generally well controlled rhythmic pulse. Gary

demonstrated the need to sustain the opening F sharp note to mimic a drone and to clearly clarify the inflections. Robbie gave an equally charismatic performance with the bending of certain notes echoing the Arabic wavering of the human voice, something which Gary admired and wished to include in future performances !

Evelina Kisliak's spirited and rousing performance of "Barndance " required swift movement of the left hand through the various positions and Gary gave good advice on how to economise on these changes to minimise fatigue.

The winning performance was given by Sofia Carson who played the lilting waltz "Winters Dream" expressively and with excellent technical prowess. Gary congratulated all entrants who played at such a high level.

The senior section began with Teresa Henley playing the bitter sweet piece "Memories of Summer ". Gary gave some valuable advice on the positioning of the music to one's left to minimise the to-ing and fro-ing of the head from music stand to the fretboard, a perilous activity if varifocal glasses are worn!

Baz Boxall then gave an intimate interpretation of "Joie de Vivre" where the listener drifted off to the tranquil cafe life in Paris. Unfortunately Gary was reminded of his slightly unsuccessful French Oral O' Level exam and a resulting strained Anglo-French relationship. In sharp contrast to Parisian cafe culture, Jez Roger's buoyant performance of Rondo Rodeo listened to by him in the early hours of the morning from New Zealand, set our toes tapping as the music spun wildly like a whirling dervish.

Jay once again gave a wonderful performance of "Birds flew over the Spire ". He captured the arcs and shapes of bird flights riding effortlessly on the thermal currents in the sky as he soared to first prize but was closely followed by Baz.

The format of the festival provided a relaxed and informal setting where technical proficiency, a high standard of guitar playing and colourful and informative feedback from the composer made all the hard work worth while. The participants greatly benefited from the detailed and constructive analysis of their performance and the composers were not disappointed with the performer's interpretation of their works. Southampton Guitar Society also found the event informative and posted the link on their own website.

All participants would like to thank Vincent and Gary for their constructive comments, Sasha for masterminding the event, David and Leigh for their valued technical input and for Julie's wonderful psychedelic picture of a guitar found on the Club's website.

Teresa Henley Publicity officer

On Wednesday 16th June the West Sussex Guitar Club committee members held a general meeting by Zoom and top of the agenda was the much



awaited Summer Party. Last year's party entitled "Life on the Ocean Waves " was very successful and hugely popular, requiring the performances to be staged in two parts and receiving 266 views in total on YouTube.

However, it was felt that sustaining everyone's interest with another virtual event would be difficult to achieve. Consequently, a face-to-face party was proposed for Saturday 17th July. The delay in lifting of restrictions from June 21st to the 19th July precipitated a ping-pong toing and froing of a suitable date, finally ending with Saturday 31st July. Various themes suggested oscillated like the spinning guitar from "The Plague", "Dr. Who", "Theres No Place Like Home " but settled eventually on Debbie Burford's radiant idea of "Bring me Sunshine". A Covid Risk Assessment was posted on the Club's website so that all who wished to attend would feel safe. Amongst the hand sanitiser and safely spaced chairs was a table laden with food and Sasha's ubiquitous punch, all placed under a petal laced field of sunflowers projected onto a screen in the shape of giant sunflower.

The strangeness of being amongst a group of people was felt by most if not all. Covid 19 has spun a double threaded cord of fear of the virus and of social anxiety grown from almost 18 months of varying degrees of social isolation.

However, with Sasha dressed in a Turkish waistcoat and acting as the Master of Ceremonies the party began with Guitar Harmony playing Ballet by Praetorius and Callipso under the leadership of their new leader Andrew Richardson. The Club's Orchestra then played Arena -y-Sol, Come Ye Sons of Art and Partial Eclipse under the baton of Linda Kelsall-Barnett. The much loved "Here Comes the Sun", arranged by Andrew, steeped us all in the warmth of hope of better things to come.

The fantastic Carson Trio comprised of David, Sofia and Lucy then played "Spain" by Colin Arenstain and followed by Sofia and Lucy's South American duet receiving a heartfelt round of applause for this family ensemble. Newcomer Yohan Benchetrit gave an impressive performance by memory of the Prelude from the Cello Suite no.1 by J.S. Bach. We all hope that he will join the Club and inspire us with further performances.

Sasha interspersed the performances with three fascinating YouTube video clips of the more unconventional ways of playing the guitar by virtue of using one's chin, playing the fretboard with both



Total harmony in the family: the Carson Trio

hands as if it were a keyboard and then dancing on a giant keyboard to produce the sound of a piano. You had to see it to believe it!

Gary Ryan. The virtual Composers Festival had certainly been a helpful stepping stone towards playing to a live audience, demonstrating the usefulness of technology in this journey. Debbie Burford then kindly accompanied us all on the piano as we sang the namesake of the party "Bring me Sunshine" with memories of the comedy duo Morcambe and Wise close by. The petals circling the image of the field of sunflowers projected onto the



Teresa's debut



At last performing live!

Jay Huff gave another excellent interpretation of Lachrimose by John Dowland in preparation of a weeks intense guitar tuition at Dillington guitar festival. There followed an interval where we all indulged in the array of cakes, flans and pastries all washed down with Sasha's punch.

Teresa Henley then gave her debut performance of the bitter-sweet piece "Memories of Summer" by

screen unexpectedly began to fall in a humorous moment reminiscent of the childhood rhyme "He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not."

The concert ended with the much loved Linda Kelsall-Barnett performing Sunburst by Andrew York followed by beautiful Lullabye by Arne Brattland. Equally as impressive as her performance was her invention of a strap attached round her waist to the guitar, designed to prevent it from slipping away from her appropriately

coloured yellow skirt. The evening would not have been quite the same without the spontaneous commencement of the chin playing guitarist on the Youtube video just as Linda was about to play demonstrating that even technology can be fallible.

The party was a much needed tonic to what has been a difficult time for all and a small but important



step to slowly, safely but surely, infection rates permitting, returning to our old selves. A big thank you is to be extended to the performers, the organisers, Julie Insull for creating a giant sunflower and to Sasha for bringing together the individual pieces to form one.

Teresa Henley

COMPOSER OF THE MONTH

FRANCESCO TARREGA was born in Villarreal, Spain on 21 November 1852, and was a composer and classical guitarist of the Romantic Period. As a boy, he learned a little from a blind player, Manuel Gonzalez. In 1862, he heard Julian Arcas play. Arcas was then the best guitarist in the world, and passed down to Tarrega the traditional techniques and characteristics of the guitar. After military service, aged 22, he entered the Real Conservatorio, Madrid, to study piano and harmony, but after giving a guitar recital at the the Conservatorio he devoted his career to the guitar, extending his international reputation as a guitarist, and thereby promoting the guitar as a popular instrument. He took great care in his written transcriptions, and tried to avoid the use of open strings, to achieve resonance and tone colours at the higher positions of the fingerboard.

As well as his own compositions, including Recuerdos de la Alhambra, he wrote over 100 transcriptions of music for other instruments. In popularising the instrument, he is often called the Father of the Guitar, and is considered the greatest guitarist of all time. Married with 3 children, he died in Barcelona, on 15 December 1909, aged 57

Julian Bobak Librarian

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 18 September	<i>VIDA GUITAR QUARTET</i>
Saturday 25 September	<i>Club Evening & AGM</i>
Saturday 16 October	<i>Club Evening</i>
Saturday 6 November	<i>RECITAL TBA</i>
Sunday 28 November	<i>WEST SUSSEX GUITAR FESTIVAL</i>
Saturday 18 December	<i>CHRISTMAS Party</i>

The West Sussex Guitar Club is grateful for the continued support given by:

Ackerman Music

