

Ramirez, Dowland & Britten

On September 21st, Charles Ramirez opened the Club's tenth season with an intense and thought-provoking recital, in the first half of which he explored the legacy of John Dowland.

In his 'Concise History of the Classic Guitar' Graham Wade is in no doubt as to the historic significance of the evening's main work. 'The beginning of a new era in the guitar's development could be dated from the premier of *Nocturnal*,' he writes. For many of us drawn naturally to the guitar's pre-modern repertoire, but perhaps requiring a nudge towards less easy material, an appreciation of Britten's Bream-piece might be enhanced by some insight into its intention and structure. Who better to provide it than Professor Ramirez, with what amounted to an illuminating lecture pertaining to the first half of his recital.

Let's take another quotation, this time from Peter Evan's 'The Music of Benjamin Britten'. 'The prevailing melancholy [of Britten's *Nocturnal*] is as natural to the guitar's sonorities as it is appropriate in a tribute to John Dowland'. Certainly Charles Ramirez has no trouble



Charles Ramirez

representing the guitar's sound – his is rich and full.

And again we are in good hands when it comes to understanding and conveying not only the context of the writing for Julian Bream, but also the carefully observed structural and thematic connections

Britten so cleverly makes between *Nocturnal* (fully titled *Nocturnal after John Dowland*), and Dowland's own *Come Heavy Sleep*.

I felt I understood the work much better and enjoyed it more for all this, having been introduced to it by no

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West Dean Enthrals

August this year saw two of our younger members, Alex Iles and Lydia Hepworth, gaining their first experience of the West Dean Summer School. They both came back fired with enthusiasm and gave a recital at our AGM which was both polished and highly enjoyable. You'll find their accounts of West Dean overleaf.

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New Members

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members:

Paul Edwards,
Bognor

William Farr,
Haywards Heath

Jack Fry,
Felpham

Kim King,
Barnham

Susan Olford & Colin
Humphris,
Yapton

Nigel Smith,
Worthing

We hope you enjoy many happy evenings with us.

West Dean enthrals...

(Continued from page 1)

At the end of last month, the guitar summer school at West Dean took place over 1 week. The layout of the course had been changed from previous years to concentrate more on the individual. This factor, combined with the beautiful settings for the course, a stately home surrounded by picturesque gardens and landscape, came together to make the course a great success.

It was a brilliant experience, for myself and I am sure also for all others present.

The tutors on the course were John Mills, who was also the course director. His tutoring proved to be very interesting, as he picked up on the very smallest mistakes with ease and swiftly sorted them out. Fiona Harrison, Craig Ogden, Gerald Garcia and Raymond Burley, the other tutors, all had their unique teaching ways also. Fiona taught calmly and focused on feeling mainly, and also value and evenness of notes, Craig focused mainly on fingering and technicalities, and had a laid

back personality and approach to resolving various musical problems. Gerald was fiery and enthusiastic in his teaching, emphasising feeling and the correct notes, and Raymond was focused in his teachings, centred around technique and technicalities within a piece.

The day incorporated a performance class or orchestra, an option in which the student chose an era of music, the pieces of which to study, the learning zone teaching composition and performance techniques, amongst other things. There were also several master classes, and professional recitals on three evenings. The first of the three was David Russell, who also ran a master class the next day, then Carlos Bonell, who incorporated Tarrega as the basis of his programme, celebrating 150 years since Tarrega's birth, and the final recital was played by Xuefei Yang.

Apart from the tutors and structure, the course was also made very enjoyable by the various people on it. Students came from a wide range of



Lydia Hepworth

locations, including Holland, Belgium and New Zealand. It was great to get to know new people, all with a common interest, in music and the classical guitar. The social side to the course was a lot of fun, at break times and also evenings, with a swimming pool and bar close at hand. All in all, I shall not be forgetting this course for a long time, this having been my first course of this kind leaving a lasting impact and many happy memories.

Lydia Hepworth



Alex Iles with David Russell

Hidden away from the rest of the world in a small corner near Chichester lies one of the most alluring and graceful places you would ever see in your life. And if David Russell's masterful playing, John Mills' gripping lessons, or Gerald Garcia's pure rage fails to inspire

you as a musician, the sheer charm of West Dean won't. Without a doubt most sessions and master classes that I attended were both useful and challenging, and I am positive that every guitarist developed in some way or another – whether through participating or just observing. However, for some of us, it was very interesting to discover that it was mainly in the time that we spent between classes when we felt that we were really moving forward.

It's never one thing that makes us improve; it's usually a

combination. Consequently, you can't spend an hour with Craig Ogden and immediately become a more accomplished player, it takes time to develop what you have absorbed and learned. This is something very important that I learnt from the course - it's possible to learn music in a short period of time, but it takes so much more dedication to understand it. This is how being at West Dean can be a huge advantage - everybody is a musician. And not only is it possible to talk to internationally famous guitarists in a social manner, but we are given a chance to focus on many different areas of our playing in a musical environment.

Alex Iles

Mark Finishes Season in Style

An inspiring performance by Mark Ashford concluded our last season with style. Mark chose to open his recital with a full scale work, the *Grand Sonata* by Sor. Each of the four contrasting movements are full of romantic ideas so typical for the turn of the 19th century. The Sonata has a wealth of lyrical statements, dialogues and original melodies exploring and - at the time the sonata was written - expanding the guitar technique. Interpreting such a work demands a lively imagination and special concentration to avoid making the music sound trivial. Mark succeeded very well and held the attention of the audience throughout. He fully conveyed the character of every episode, whether dramatic, flamboyant or humorous, and gave this well known work a most enjoyable interpretation.

Another big and very demanding piece followed - the beautiful *Sonata* by JS Bach, BWV



Mark Ashford

1003. Originally written for violin solo, in arrangement for the guitar this wonderful music acquired a new quality by revealing harmonies which in the original are only hinted at. Mark played the Sonata with great emotional intensity and superb technical flare. The slow movements were deep and spiritual, the fugue was immaculately constructed and the final allegro despite its technical difficulty flowed effortlessly and was

rewarded by the most enthusiastic applause!

The second half began with the *Sonatina* by the English composer Lennox Berkeley. Although Berkeley's musical language is modern, and not so easy to interpret in a conventional way, Mark's performance was so convincing from the very first note, that it captured my imagination instantly and the sense of excitement and adventure did not go till the very last sound. The second movement, lyrical

and full of longing with glimpses of threat in the background, flowed peacefully and evaporated in a gentle harmonic. The third began with an insistent motif which grew in intensity and towards the end became a torrent of arpeggios and rasgueados and finally exploded in an abrupt chord. A moment of silence and another torrent of applause rewarded the artist for a most dedicated performance of an unfamiliar but fascinating piece!

Mark returned then to the conventional guitar repertoire with four pieces by Tarrega: *Dansa Mora*, *Adelita*, *Pavana* and the *Study on a Theme of Mendelssohn*. This is where Mark's lyrical gift showed itself in full. Add to that an excellent technique, Mark's wonderful tone, a responsive guitar in the hands of a most sensitive player and you probably have a perfect interpretation of Tarrega! Pity there was not time

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Ramirez recital ...

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fewer than six of Dowland's other pieces for the solo lute at the top of the programme. For those wishing to look further into Nocturnal, you might consider the EGTA's Guitar Forum, Vol. 1, where Stephen Goss gives a considered analysis.

After the interval, Charles played a Sonata by Mario

Castelnuovo-Tedesco (Op. 77), which again nodded back to another composer, this being an 'Ommagio a Boccherini'. Since Boccherini's writing for the guitar was not solo, we could hardly expect a similar second half structure, but Castelnuovo-Tedesco's music is easy enough to listen to as one might expect of a successful film composer.

Some might have wished for a well known encore as the audience showed its appreciation at the end, but this was not the concert for the light-hearted miniature. Not for the first time for those who have attended his adjudications at local music festivals, Charles Ramirez not only entertained us, he deepened our appreciation.

Graham Cleaver



The Third West Sussex Guitar Festival takes place in November on the 9th, 10th and 17th. This year, with the aid of generous support from all our sponsors, and particularly West Sussex County Council, we have made the exciting addition of four composition classes.

Our adjudicators this year are Amanda Cook for the junior classes and Charles Ramirez for the senior and composition classes. Amanda will also be giving our Festival Recital at 7.30pm on Saturday the 9th. Amanda's recitals are always hugely popular so do reserve your tickets early (ring Jonathan on 01243 528573 or visit the Ticket Hotline on our web site—www.westsussexguitar.com).

All guitarists should by now have received a brochure and entry form which must (absolutely must!) be returned with your entry fee by 26th October.

The Festival is a great opportunity for players of all ages to demonstrate what has been achieved in the last year and to

benefit from the advice and wisdom of our adjudicators. If you've not entered a festival before now is the time to pick a class and have a go!

Ashford recital...

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for more...

Finally - a most worthy tribute to the contemporary guitar repertoire - Roland Dyens' *Saudade No 3*. The distinct folkloric nature and improvisatory style of Dyens made this piece the ideal conclusion of a very memorable recital. However, our grateful (and good in numbers!) audience was treated to the sparkly first movement of Torroba's *Sonatina* as an encore.

Such a fine recital to conclude an excellent season - a warm thank you and much good luck to Mark. Here's looking forward to his next appearance!

Sasha LevtoV

Club Evening 19th October— 7.00pm start for juniors!

As an experiment, our Club Evening on 19th October will start **half an hour earlier than normal at 7.00pm** for junior members who would like to take part in some ensemble playing. The adults' evening will start as usual at 7.30pm when we will be treated to performances by the junior ensemble and junior soloists, breaking for our usual buffet around eight o'clock.

The latter half of the evening will provide an opportunity for all to join in some ensemble playing and for the adults to try out pieces in preparation for the West Sussex Guitar Festival in November—all in all, a great opportunity to get back into musical shape after the summer break. Hope to see you all there!

Richard Prior

Dates for your Diary

October	19th	Club Evening	November	17th	<i>West Sussex Guitar Festival: Senior Day & Composition Classes</i>
November	9th	<i>West Sussex Guitar Festival: Junior Day 1</i>		30th	The Winners' Concert
		Festival Recital: Amanda Cook	December	14th	Christmas Party
	10th	<i>West Sussex Guitar Festival: Junior Day 2</i>			

All events (except those in italics) take place on Saturdays at 7.30pm in the Regis School of Music, 46 Sudley Road, Bognor Regis. For details phone 01243 866462.

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