

Stepan Rak Concert



The WSGC was very proud to be able to welcome the Czech guitarist and composer Stepan Rak to our stage. He came over from Prague for just the one concert, his last time in Britain being some 15 years ago. The enthusiastic audience for this concert was one of

our biggest ever and indeed it would have been difficult to accommodate many more people.

The concert consisted entirely of music composed or arranged by Stepan. A bold choice, but then the music was always varied and captivated the audience who never knew what was coming next.

Stepan began his recital with the traditional *Romance* with which most guitarists are very familiar, but as the melody progressed, it was obvious other

harmonies were creeping in eventually culminating in a series of variations including a four (or was it even five) finger tremolo. We heard powerful rasguados and I even saw strings not only being plucked upwards, but also plucked downwards as the fingers flicked out at the strings.

We then heard a suite of medieval dances where Stepan was able to produce a whole range of early instrument sounds from his guitar. This was achieved by dampening the strings, playing hard ponticello, playing over the fingerboard near to the left hand fingers and sometimes even playing above the left hand fingers. Such were the variations in tone colour that it was difficult to imagine all this was produced from the one instrument. We had whistling, Shaman like chanting and some crazy rasguados to end with. No wonder Stepan's guitar is so well worn. However, it says something for Greg Smallman that after nearly 20 years of such exuberant use, the guitar still sounds so well and is in one piece!

The Song for David was written in praise of King David who was said to be endowed with the ability to heal through the power of music. The first half ended with *The Royal Suite* which was dedicated to the late Queen Mother for whom Stepan had a lot of affection. Here again we saw forward flicks of the fingers against the strings and again the Smallman was put through its paces with some *fff* sections.

The second half began with the suite *In Praise of Tea* being dedicated to the taste and fragrances of teas of the world to which Stepan is very partial. We heard *Jasmine*, *Camomile*, *Japanese* and *Indian Darjeeling Teas*. Again a whole multitude of tones were produced including oriental instruments and sitar and tabla (achieved by tapping both the guitar body and the back of the fingerboard). This suite encompassed very varied styles of playing and was surely everyone's cup of tea.

The suite *Fragrances* covered Stepan's own interpretations of the *Scent of the Sky* (*Ghost*

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New Members

We extend a very warm welcome to the following new members:

Steve Hines

from Bognor Regis

Florin Horincar

from Bognor Regis

Nicholas Spink

from Goring

Peter Rogers

from Emsworth

Nina Rideout

from Winchester

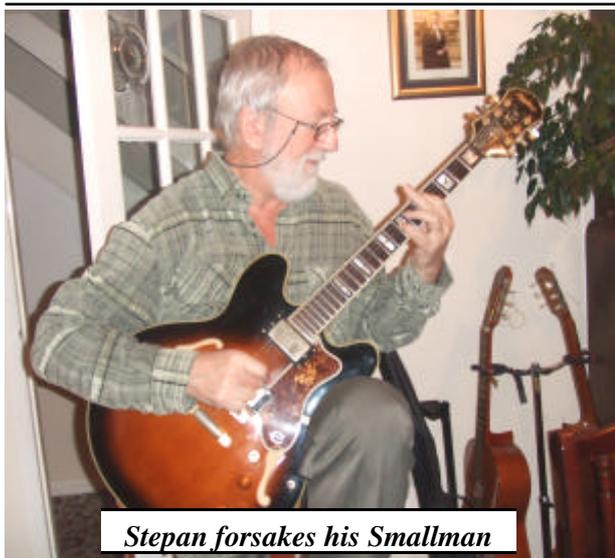
Joanna Wellwood-Froud

from Walburton

Vic Ellis

Brighton

We hope you enjoy many happy evenings at the Club!



Stepan forsakes his Smallman



With Lenka, Cobie & John & Richard Mills



Stepan arrives at the Hall



With John Mills



With Philip & Patrick Sowden



With Tamsin & Zoe Barnett

Stepan Rak 15th January 2011

Stepan Rak Concert ...

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Riders in the Sky), *The Scent of Liverpool* (*The Beatles Yesterday*) and Celtic music with dances around a lime tree.

Thunderous applause produced two encores. These were the Romanian *Hora* with distinctive Eastern European overtones as if played on a balalaika. This was followed by the very moving *Remembering Prague*, where Stepan spoke some very emotional Czech poetry which although not understood, the sentiment was obvious. There was a section where Stepan played just with his left hand

and was able to produce very loud slurs and hammer-ons and pull-offs. This then ran into a very clever adaptation of Smetana's *Vitava* where we heard a full orchestra of balalaikas.

This was quite a unique and memorable concert, one of which we had never seen before and will be talked about for some time to come. Stepan is definitely a one off. He broke down many of the conventional methods of playing the guitar and produced some wonderful varied sounds which would not be thought possible from just the one instrument.

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Stepan Off Stage

How did you get started on the guitar?

First of all I had lessons for three years with the first violinist of the Czech Harmonic Orchestra, but then he died. I then studied for an art degree involving painting and sculpture. I later played double bass in a traditional jazz band and in a Django Rheinhardt type trio. When I was 18 years old I got an electric guitar and liked the music of the Shadows and the Beatles. I then got interested in the classical guitar and had private lessons with Stepan Urban who was both my teacher and philosopher.

How did you get into composing?

That was again due to Stepan Urban. Whenever I had a problem with technique – say slurs – he suggested I write a little study to overcome the problem and from these studies I progressed into composition where I was greatly encouraged by Stepan.

You became the first professor of guitar in the Czech Republic

Yes, it was always a wish of Stepan Urban's that the classical guitar become a degree level subject rather than just being taught in music schools. I promised Stepan that I would continue his crusade. Eventually, the authorities relented and in 1981 the Prague Academy of Musical Arts established a Classical Guitar faculty and in 2000 I became the first ever university professor of guitar studies in the Czech Republic.

That sounds a familiar story with Julian Bream trying to establish the classical guitar in English

music colleges. Do you have any idea how many pieces you have composed?

No, it could run into thousands.

Your most famous student must be Pavel Steidl, how do you still manage to teach and give concerts?

Pavel was a great student and I also have had good students who now teach in various parts of the world, for example in Helsinki and Belgrade. I still teach at the Prague Academy and have some 7 – 9 students. I give maybe 150-200 concerts each year.

I was going to ask in which countries you have played, but I see you have played in over 70 different countries. Maybe I should ask where you have not played?

Well, I suppose I have not played in Iceland nor Istanbul.

You manage to achieve some wonderful tones from your guitar. In your medieval compositions I can hear various early instruments and of course we can hear balalaikas in your Czech pieces. What other sounds can you make?

Some time ago I wrote a piece where the guitar sounded like a didgeridoo and also I wrote a bagpipe piece which I played at a bagpipe festival. Like Tarrega and Sor I adapt my colours to reflect the sound I want to achieve in my compositions.

You play a Greg Smallman guitar with great enthusiasm, I thought they were supposed to be delicate instruments.

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You need to know where you can hit them otherwise you could be in trouble. I was very fortunate that in 1992 I was doing a concert tour of Australia and a fellow countrywoman Terry Pekarkova offered to buy me a guitar of my own choice. I would have liked a Smallman, but was afraid of the cost for this lady. Also I feared there would be a wait of many years. However, a few days later I met John Williams and mentioned to him I would like to have a Smallman guitar. He said that I was in luck because Greg was coming to see him the following day with two guitars for him to try. He said that if I selected the one I liked, then he would have the other. So within a few days, from nowhere I had acquired my long term dream.

I believe your son is an up and coming guitarist. Did you teach him?

My eldest son Jan Matej Rak is a very good guitarist but I did not teach him. He plays a variety of music and has recently produced a cd of evergreen type Czech music from the 1920's-1930's. He has produced some amazing arrangements for solo guitar.

Do you play other instruments?

I can still play the double bass of course and I play the balalaika

Do you still paint?

No, I do not have time, however I love photography and take many pictures.

You produce very powerful 4 finger tremolos and rasguados.

I use my right hand 4th finger a lot. Unfortunately many guitarists do not use this finger. There are many exercises that can be done to free the 4th finger from the 3rd which are both served by the same tendon. Try to alternately pluck a string with the 3rd and 4th string. Even if you later chose not to play with the 4th finger, the exercise will improve the dexterity of the right hand. Also the right hand is very strong at plucking the strings upwards, but not at playing downwards. I exercise playing downwards with the right fingers so that the strings are effectively flicked. This is a good technique. Furthermore rather than playing rest strokes I often start off as if playing a rest stroke but curl the finger away from the next string at the last moment. This is half way between a rest stroke and a free stroke.

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Guitar Masters at Brighton Festival 2011

Fabio Zanon, The Eden Stell Duo, and Edoardo Catemario will be playing at St Nicholas Church, Dyke Rd, Brighton on Thursday s at 7:45pm on respectively 12th, 19th, 26th May. For tickets tel: 01273 709709

Stepan Rak Masterclass

After a most enjoyable concert the previous evening, eight very lucky guitarists were fortunate enough to have a 30 mins masterclass with Stepan the following morning. In just 30 mins, Stepan had managed to conjure up some amazing magic in considerably improving the performances no matter how well they sounded on first listening. All credit to the guitarists for taking on board what Stepan said so quickly and being able to switch from their usual way of playing. Credit must also be given to Stepan who was able to interpret what the composers had in mind, although he had not heard some of the pieces of music before.

Emily Spirit played a dance in 3/4 time. Stepan wanted to hear more emphasis on the first beat of each bar so that it sounded more like a dance. He also suggested playing the melody line

alone without accompaniment so that the dynamics of the music can be better discerned. In fact this was a suggestion for many of the pieces that members played.

For Zoe Barnett, Stepan again suggested just playing the melody line and try to make the piece sound as beautiful as possible without the clutter of the accompaniment. Zoe then played the accompaniment without the tune. With this better understanding, when played again in full, the piece sounded even better.

Linda Kelsall-Barnett played a very challenging Barrios tremolo piece. Again Stepan suggested playing the piece without the tremolo so that a better feel of the dynamics is obtained. He also suggested incorporating vibrato in addition to the tremolo. Stepan then suggested playing the accompaniment and singing the tune to get a real

feel for the piece. Stepan predicted that the audience would soon be in tears with these small improvements.

David Roe chose to play *Torija* by Torroba. Here Stepan said to imagine a dialogue between a violin and a cello. As such the piece should be played with much legato. Stepan said that his teacher had once said that with a short piece which may not be too technically demanding it is important to fill it with many different colours and dynamics everywhere. In this way every little building block is important and should be placed with care. This ultimately results in a final wonderful architectural building.

Nina Rideout played Villa Lobos *Prelude no.1*. Stepan said that he was once fortunate enough to hear a home tape recording of Villa Lobos playing this piece which was dedicated to his wife who was a cellist. There were errors on the recording and often V-L would play out of rhythm but the feeling he was trying to achieve could all be heard – cello like sounds and even balalaika sounds (he liked Russian music). Also many of the strums were played with the thumb. Guitarists do not have to slavishly try to copy this approach, but this is what the composer had in

mind.

Tom Emery played Lennox Berkley’s *Sonatina*. Here Stepan suggested playing it much slower as Julian Bream does. If it is too fast, much of the detail is overlooked and articulation is lost. It was suggested that the staccato sections be played with a little vibrato.

Jake Brooks played a Prelude and Waltz by Koshkin. Stepan commented that unusually the prelude was also a waltz and that it is important to have a contrast between the two pieces. The final waltz must win and be the grander piece. He also advised in sections to pluck with the flesh of the thumb rather than the thumb nail.

Sam Brown played his own arrangement of the theme music from a Japanese film. Stepan liked the use of a capo at the first fret which he thought gave the guitar a totally different sound. In order to achieve even more expression, Stepan advised slowly removing the right hand from over the soundhole after plucking so that the audience get a secondary surge of sound which increases the sustain. This can be increased further by moving the back of the instrument away from the stomach so that the instrument is not damped.

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With Emily Spirit



With Zoe Barnett



Stepan conducts David Roe



The masterclass with the master-pupils

	Chi Fest 2011 Under 18	1st	2nd
650	<i>Novice under 9</i>	Thomas Bailey	Sam Boiardini
650a	<i>Beginner under 9</i>	Finlay Boardman	William Rumsey/Lydia Yallop
651	<i>Novice 10-12</i>	Jessica Clarke	Georgia Wynn
651a	<i>Beginner 10-12</i>	Kitty Scott	Tom Phillips
652	<i>Novice over 13</i>	Joe Delaney-Stone	
653	<i>Solo under 12</i>	Louis Jenkin	Molly McKendrick
654	<i>Family Ensemble</i>	Emily & Simon Wallace	
655	<i>Solo I age 12-15</i>	Dariya Skerratt	Morgane Willer
655a	<i>Solo II age 12-15</i>	Emily Spirit	Nick Hagan
656	<i>Bach under 12</i>	Charlie Elliott	
657	<i>Bach 13-18</i>	Patrick Sowden	
658	<i>Solo under 18</i>	Victor Smith	Keita Jibiki
659	<i>Duet under 12</i>	Rose Duo	Alex Davies & Jack Lomax
660	<i>Duet 13 -15</i>	Ollie Troy & Nick Hagan	
661	<i>Duet under 18</i>	Deller & Spirit Duo	
662	<i>Trio/Quartet under 12</i>	The Brighton Duo	
664	<i>Guitar Orchestra</i>	Elementary WSMS Guitars	
664a	<i>Advanced Ensemble</i>	Intermed WSMS Guitars	
665a	<i>Acc song under 12</i>	Francesca Clayton	Dariya Skerratt
665b	<i>Acc song under 18</i>	Peter Hopkins	
666	<i>Junior Recital under 12</i>	Zoe Barnett	
666a	<i>Int Recital 12–15</i>	George Robinson	Patrick Sowden
667	<i>Adv Recital under 18</i>	Adam Lack	Peter Rogers
668	<i>Tech Perf under 12</i>	Zoe Barnett	C Phillips/C Jolley
668a	<i>Tech Perf 12-15</i>	Andrew Creswick	Patrick Sowden
668b	<i>Tech Perf under 18</i>	Adam Lack	

	Chi Fest 2011 18+	1st	2nd
670	<i>Adult Novice</i>	Nick Spinks	
671	<i>Solo Int I</i>	Sue Evans	Irina Ilieva/Ray Reddick
671a	<i>Solo Int II</i>	Samuel Stormont	Barry Boxall
672	<i>Novice Duet</i>	Duo Nuovo	
672a	<i>Intermediate Duet</i>	Debbie Burford & Diana Green	
673	<i>Advanced Duet</i>	The Mirror Image Duo	
674	<i>Guitar + other Inst</i>	Quintessential Quintet	
675	<i>Trio/Quartet</i>	Gala Trio	
676	<i>Guitar Orchestra</i>	Regis Guitars/Sweet Guitars	
677	<i>Solo Open I</i>	Terry Woodgate	Peter Rogers
677a	<i>Solo Open II</i>	Tom Emery	Nina Rideout
678	<i>Bach Open</i>	Tom Emery	Sam Brown
679	<i>Recital Open Int</i>	Mitch Callow	Alex Cox
679a	<i>Recital open Adv</i>	Sam Brown	
680	<i>Acc Song</i>	Tom Jeffers	Peter Watkins
681	<i>Flamenco</i>	Steve Higgs	Ray Reddick
682	<i>Composition</i>	Mitch Callow	Nina Rideout

The Chichester Festival 2011

Out of all categories in the 56th Chichester Festival of Music, Dance and Speech, the guitar section, as usual, had the most entries. This year there were a total of 190 entries in 53 classes comprising of 121 entries under 18 and 69 entries from adults. This required two full weekends to fit everyone in. However, it is not just the sheer number of entrants which is so impressive, it is also the standard of playing which improves year on year. Although all performances can be improved upon, many were of a very high standard and made for very enjoyable listening.

Mark Ashford was the adjudicator of the under 18's and Paul Gregory adjudicated the adults. Interestingly, Mark Ashford was guest musician on Radio 2's Friday Night is Music Night just a week before the festival. He played some superb arrangements of French tunes that he had recorded in November at the Thomas a Beckett church in Pagham.

I always think the adjudicators are rather like doctors. They can not only tell what ails a performance, but they can also diagnose a cure for the problem. Both wanted to see a performance and not just a guitar being played. This means confidently presenting yourself, loudly and clearly announcing what you are about to play and at the end, bowing to the audience to acknowledge their applause before removing all your paraphernalia. While playing, the adjudicator wants to see a commitment and passion with your own personality coming across. Do not select pieces which are too difficult to play (particularly under pressure). It is better to perform a simple piece really well rather than perform all sorts of complicated finger gymnastics and keep tripping over. Performances can come unstuck if you have not done sufficient preparation in order to gain the appropriate technique in both hands or you do not understand the music or you are not in the right frame of mind.

Mark noted that the majority of youngsters heed their teachers and have good posture and good technique. This will stand you in good stead for the future and will form the foundation for more advanced playing. However, he did see many examples of double picking where one finger repeatedly plucks strings instead of the fingers alternating. Although simple pieces can

sound ok when double picked, it will give rise to problems in the future when more complex pieces are tackled. The problem needs to be corrected now. Mark suggested adding right hand fingering to the music and adhering to it when playing.

Beware of hunched shoulders or playing sideways to the guitar. This will create tension which will manifest itself with more difficult pieces. Paul noted some left hands were gripping the fingerboard too tightly so that the fingers have to unclamp before they can move, whereupon they clamp down again. This invariably results in the plucking hand playing before the right hand is ready. Right and left hands have to work together like a perfect marriage to achieve the wanted effect.

Do not play a piece too fast or be too keen to get started. Take time and think through the first few bars before playing a note. Many triplets were not played evenly. The cure here is say the word 'Ev-en-ly', 'Ev-en-ly' for each triplet. (I always say 'Cam-ber-ley', 'Cam-ber-ley' which is where I lived before moving down here).

If you feel you may lose your way, do not be afraid to take the music on the stage. Many players did play from memory which is commendable since they can then be more expressive. However, it is important to keep returning to the music to ensure that you are accurate and that misreads do not creep in which can become firmly established and are then hard to correct.

Everyone could play with more dynamics and more colour. Paul drew an analogy between playing rubato and putting sugar in your tea. A little is fine and improves the taste, but too much and it becomes over-sweet and the pulse is lost. Always try to bring the tune out above the accompaniment. Singing the tune or playing the tune without accompaniment can help here. Mark did a wonderful demonstration of an arpeggio where he accented different right hand fingers which made each exercise sound quite different. Paul suggested recording yourself playing. Digital recorders are now cheap, truthful and easy to use – even iplayers have them! You can then tell what requires correcting (too little/much accenting, insufficient colour, a lost pulse, an uneven triplet

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etc).

In ensemble playing it is imperative everyone knows the road map through the piece. Repeats must be clearly marked and adhered to. Beware of playing repeats identically each time – change the dynamics or colour to add interest. If music is to be read, then page turning must be quite unobtrusive. It may pay to copy certain pages so all can be spread out in front of you or even consider reducing the size of the music. It is important not to just play the notes slavishly which can give an effect of a lot of short sections strung together, but to see the overall picture and phrasing of where the piece is heading – it’s beginning, middle and end.

Having said all that, if winners were to be judged on how their performances improve year on year, then everyone would be a winner. Well done

to all entrants who put so much time in preparation for the event. Paul commented on how lucky we are to have a proper recital hall where, regardless of level of playing, we can all go on stage and give performances. How many other societies can boast that?

As always we must thank all who took part in the festival, the adjudicators for their most helpful advice, the hard working entrants, their teachers and long suffering families and our band of willing helpers—Julie Insull, Maureen Burgen, Peggy Carrott, Debbie Burford, John White and Moyria Woodgate. Above all, however, the linchpins of such festivals as always are Nina and Sasha who in addition to multitasking throughout the festival do so much work behind the scenes for weeks beforehand to ensure that all runs smoothly.

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Junior Guitar Orchestras



Guitar Solo 12-13



Bach Under 12



Mark with Adam Lack & Peter Rogers



Guitar Solo Intermediate



Guitar Duet Intermediate

Christmas Party December 18th 2010



The Sound of Belles



Duelling Dojos



Francesca prepares for launch



More balloons for Abigail



Quizmistress Julie

Roy Barron



Members will be saddened to hear of the death of Roy Barron on Monday 31st January 2011. Roy, who lived in Southsea, had been an enthusiastic member of the club for some 10 years. He attended most of our concerts and club evenings and always supported the guitar festivals where he will be remembered for playing pieces by his favourite composer Peter Nuttall. His cheery smile and enthusiasm will be greatly missed. Roy was 72 years old and leaves two sons.

In recognition of his support and enthusiasm for the guitar, the club has acquired a Roy Barron Memorial Trophy for the Chichester Festival Guitar Solo Intermediate Class which he would always enter and invariably win!

Vital Mental Medicine

I don't know if anyone heard the fascinating story of Leonard Hussey's banjo on Radio 4 just before Christmas. Hussey was a scientist/meteorologist on Shackleton's voyage to the South Pole in 1914. This was to be an ill-fated expedition. The ice closed in around their ship, the *Endurance*, and the boat drifted for some 1200 miles in pack ice over 306 days. Eventually, the boat was crushed to the point that both sides of the ship met in the middle and as she started to sink the boat was evacuated. Each man was allowed to take 2lbs of possessions with them, but Shackleton himself brought out Hussey's heavy banjo saying '*we must have it – it is vital mental medicine*'.

The men spent 5 months marooned on ice and as this began to break up they took to the lifeboats they had dragged with them. They finished up on Elephant Island (their first land for 497 days) where Shackleton and half the crew set off in one of the boats to get help. Hussey and 21 crew members remained on the island living on seals and penguins and sheltering in the upturned lifeboats. Throughout their terrible ordeal, Hussey entertained the crew and kept up their morale with his banjo. (You may think being marooned for so long was torture enough without having to listen to the banjo!) After nearly a further 6 months, Shackleton eventually returned and the crew was rescued.

The story goes to illustrate the incredible fortitude of these explorers of long ago, but also shows the power of music to help in times of trouble and stress. Even in modern times, your yoke of worries can be lifted with the therapy of music. Just before the Antarctic expedition, Hussey was on an exploration in the Sudan where again his banjo entertained both his comrades and the natives in temperatures of 116°F. Even from the time of Drake, musicians were employed on board ship. I was aware that a fiddle or squeeze box could help synchronise nautical jobs such as raising sails or raising anchor and could keep the crew's spirits up, but I was not aware of the musician's additional occupation when exploring foreign lands. Apparently the musicians were the first to set foot on inhospitable shores and would play their music to calm any armed natives or cannibals and show that they meant no harm and were not a threat. (Presumably the plundering took place once they had gained the natives' confidence). This job of emissary was very important and one presumes that the choice of repertoire was very important, any 'heavy metal' type music being conceived as a war cry!

Hussey's banjo is on display at the National Maritime Museum at Falmouth in Cornwall.

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Bognor's Winter Wonderland

It is hard to believe now how terrible the weather was in December on the usually mild Bognor Riviera. Regretfully, it was thought advisable to cancel the Club Evening on the 4th December after everywhere was covered in a very pretty but treacherous 4" of snow. The Christmas Party on the 18th Dec could have gone the same way but fortunately the forecast blizzard on top of an already icy and snowy surface never quite reached us.

Because of limited space in the hall when tables are set up, it was necessary to attempt to limit the party to just 60 revellers. This number could have been slightly exceeded, but as it happened there were a number of cancellations from those travelling from afar because of the weather, so we were set up for a comfortable and enjoyable evening. We would worry about the getting home bit when the time arose.

Many thanks must go to Sasha and Nina for all the work they did in preparing for the party. There was an enormous Christmas tree (akin to that displayed in Trafalgar Square in days gone by) which somehow made it through the diminutive doors and where the fairy on top just kissed the ceiling. There were numerous decorations throughout the building, but above all there was the customary Dickensian table groaning with food. Although some food is brought in by the members, Nina does have to substantially supplement this. It would be good if members could try to bring along a plate of food equivalent to the amount they will consume. This will help to keep club expenses down and make it easier for Nina in anticipating what to buy.

We had some fine entertainment from our members. Peter Watkins wrote a special Christmas song for the occasion. We heard the Barnett family's rendition of Pernambuco's *Sound of Bells* as it has never before been played with Zoe

playing lead guitar, Linda accompanying and Tamzin doing an amazing job with an ironing board complete with a set of hand bells. These were juggled around but she always seemed to find the correct one to ding at the appropriate time. We heard a new duo of Matthew Farrant and Patrick Sowden playing *Choros no.1*. The youngsters – Patrick and Alice Sowden, Victor Smith, Tamzin and Zoe gave us a seasonal medley with piano, guitar and voice. Steve Higgs, Terry Woodgate and Sam Brown entertained us with solo guitar.

The music was not all guitar however as June Nicholas sang a carol to Nina's piano accompaniment, Hannah Farrant played the violin while dad accompanied on the piano, Alice Sowden played a jazzy saxophone piece with piano accompaniment from dad Philip, and Curtis and Keith (dad) Strong gave us some banjo/dojo pieces – at one time accompanied by Steve Higgs on guitar for an impromptu performance of *Duelling Banjos*. We also heard an amusing poetry reading from Julie Insull, who also provided us with a quiz, there was a musical quiz from Debbie Burford and Abigail told us a joke about 3 little pigs. Sasha provided a lucky dip for the youngsters where the favoured prize seemed to be huge flying party balloons which were launched skywards with great relish from both youngsters and their parents!

We went to a number of 'do's over the Christmas period, but the WSGC party tops them all. Well done and thanks to everyone - to those who gave us a most memorable evening's entertainment, to those who brought food along, to those who helped clear up afterwards, and to all those who came along. Above all we must thank Sasha and Nina for guaranteeing as always such a wonderful party with a friendly ambience.

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Electronic Newsletter

As you are probably aware, you can either receive a hard copy of the club newsletter through the post or read an electronic version from our website at www.westsussexguitar.com. Our database on

members preferences here may not be up to date. If you no longer require a hard copy of the newsletter, please drop me an e mail – see address on back page 16.

Editor's Piece

As always, time is rapidly flying by. Christmas was a long time ago and already Easter is on the horizon. We are now over half way through our season. Since our last newsletter, we have had a very successful Christmas Party, two wonderful concerts given by Stepan Rak and Fabio Zanon, a masterclass with Stepan and a very successful guitar section of the Chichester Festival with 190 entries. Well done to everyone who entered. As a long time observer to these events, I must say I see improved performances from members every time they participate. This gives us all a very warm feeling and makes it all worthwhile. All entrants should feel very proud of themselves. Please keep up the good work.

Our next concert on 30th April is given by the John Mills and Cobie Smit duo. Our final concert of the season on the 4th June sees a welcome return from the USA of guitarist Richard Smith with Julie Adams on cello. The duo will present a mix of fine music covering the whole spectrum from evergreens through to the classics. We have two special club evenings coming up with guests for the second halves of the evening. These are Natalia Lipnitskaya who will be coming from Paris especially to play for us as a young professional on 26th March. On 14th May, long standing member Steve Higgs will give a presentation and demonstration of the various

flamenco rhythms. The season will finish with our usual summer party on the 2nd July. None of these events are to be missed.

I hope where appropriate as many members as possible will fill in enclosed standing order forms to help with membership renewals. Last year only 27 members out of a membership of 100+ chose to renew by this method. This means that Patrick our overworked treasurer (who is also membership secretary, charity officer and sponsorship officer) has to spend a lot of time chasing overdue subscriptions and paying in monies over a protracted period of time which can last some 3 months. With a standing order neither you, nor Patrick has to be proactive. The bank will take care of everything. Membership is due on 1st September and will be kept at just £15 for single membership and £25 for family membership. Under 18's can still attend our events for free. Where else could you get such amazing value?

I apologise that some articles have had to be held over this time because we have yet another bumper newsletter.

Finally, can I please invite you to please bring along some food (by way of an American supper) to our club evenings. Of late, donations seem to have reduced resulting in the club having to buy extra food to make up the shortfall.

An Adjudicator's Perspective

I have just spent a wonderful weekend as the adjudicator of the junior guitar section of the Chichester Festival for Music, Dance & Speech.

There were around 100 entries, covering 23 classes overall. They ranged from a class for under 9 year-olds with under one year of tuition, to a recital class for the advanced 18 year old and under. There was even a class for 'Family Ensembles'.

My goodness how things have changed since I was taking part in this sort of thing. Although there were some specific guitar classes in my local area my overriding memory is being disqualified from a string section class because I didn't have an accompanist! I'm glad to say that it

caused a bit of a stir at the time. I have also been back since to adjudicate at that festival and am happy to say they now have a thriving guitar environment.

Anyway I arrived at the Bognor Regis Music School a little after 9am to a room completely full of young guitarists. They seemed to fill every last inch of space. Nothing like starting with a bang eh! And so it continued for two days. The enthusiasm, commitment and dedication amongst so many was a great pleasure to see. This rang true not just from the students, but also the parents, the teachers and the organisers.

My job was to write as fast as possible, offer words of advice and then to award more trophies, medals and certificates than I have ever seen. The

organiser Sasha Levtov from the [West Sussex Guitar Society](#) did say I could take away a medal at the end of the weekend, but alas it hasn't materialised yet!

I don't really have a set criteria when adjudicating but I must say that if I am moved emotionally in any way then you're on the right track. I have to feel that the performer, however young or old and whatever level they're playing at, really connects and is passionate about the music they are playing. It doesn't matter to me about the difficulty of the piece, it's just what they do with it that counts. Far too often I hear students young and old playing pieces that are far too difficult for them. Why do they put themselves through that? It is so much better for the confidence to play within yourself, particularly when you are confronted with an ageing bald man armed with a pen and paper!

Anyway I did see this 'magic' a number of times throughout the weekend and generally I was really impressed with all the candidates. Without fail each piece was nicely introduced (totally out of a musician's comfort zone), great posture was on show throughout and then (with some exceptions) there were some nice smiles and bows at the end. What a treat! Stage presence is immensely important and added greatly to their performances.

I must mention a few events from the weekend which will remain with me for a long, long time. I was in one of my waffling moods talking about stage presence involving being an actor on stage etc. At one point I do remember saying "the audience don't really care if you've had a bad day or not feeling well. You just have to hide those things and get on with it". I was in particular referring to a boy who looked thoroughly dejected and unhappy in his performance and certainly let the audience know how he was feeling. Anyhow during the second day of the festival there was one

very young (and I might add, very talented) boy who was feeling very poorly but still wanted to play. After he played his mother came up to me and told me that he had said that nobody would have cared that he was feeling so bad. I must admit that I did feel quite bad about this but had forgotten how literally children can take you sometimes. By the way he did hide it very well!

The other event was the 'Family Ensemble' class. My daughter is just 2 years old so I have all this to come but it was so lovely to see a parent and child up there making music together especially the sideways dagger glances that came from one particular girl towards her father when he made a mistake. Actually in this class I wasn't sure who was more nervous, the parent or the child. The pride and joy that a parent must feel to see their child up there performing and in this case alongside must be immense.

Well, I had a fabulous weekend. I came away with a nice warm feeling, safe in the knowledge that the classical guitar is truly alive and well. The event was excellently organised by Sasha and his team, and I must make a special mention to all the teachers down there who do a superb job of inspiring these kids week in week out.

There is much criticism about the competitive nature of a music festival, but I say they are a great thing. Where else could a young player come along and hear so many young guitarists perform? Perhaps at the [World Youth Guitar Festival](#) held in August this year in Cheltenham (unashamed plug!) They can only be inspired and feel a sense of pride at having got up on that stage and performed their hearts out, even if it is only just to put that lovely shiny trophy on their mantelpiece for a year!

Mark Ashford (see www.markashford.com)

Graham Devine at Cheltenham

Graham Devine will be teaching and giving a concert at this year's Cheltenham International Guitar Festival from July 23rd- 29th 2011. Other guests include American guitarist and composer Ben Verdery and Bill Kanengiser from the fabulous LA quartet, both will also be performing a recital and giving masterclasses. It should be a really great week of music making. If anyone is

interested in studying with Graham at the Festival please e-mail him on info@grahamdevine.com and he will send you further information about the course etc.

Further information on the course can be obtained by emailing Phil Castang phil@igf.org.uk or see the Website:

www.igf.org.uk/International_Guitar_Foundation/Classical.html

Fabio Zanon Concert...

(Continued from page 16)

he gave. The set of variations exploits every feature of the guitar and Fabio excelled at demonstrating his virtuosity with this 20 minute piece which must surely be quite exhausting to play.

The second half of the programme was on a lighter note and devoted to the music of South America. We travelled all around the sub-continent as we heard the music from Uruguay, Paraguay, Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Columbia, Argentina and finally Brazil. Apart from the *Danza Paraguaya* by Barrios, I had not heard any of the pieces before. They were all immediately enjoyable and go to show that what a wealth of

wonderful South American music there is awaiting discovery by the rest of the world.

With an over-full house and such wonderful playing, it was no wonder that the applause from the enthusiastic audience was deafening. Fabio presented us with a beautiful lollipop of an encore by Ponce – *Estrellita*.

Fabio is very much in demand all over the world both as a guitar performer, as a guitar teacher and visiting professor at a number of music colleges but also as an orchestral conductor. We were very privileged to have him come to play for us and we must hope it is not too long before he returns to us again.

TW

West Sussex Youth Music Awards

This year there were 30 entries in this competition which encompasses all instruments. Four finalists were selected who competed on 13th March. One of the finalists was member Sam Brown who played three Spanish pieces covering 5 centuries of the guitar. All finalists performed to an exceedingly high concert standard and the two adjudicators had the unenviable job of selecting a winner who this year was pianist Rachel West. However, Sam who was a runner up, proved to be a worthy emissary of the guitar and as always played a most enjoyable programme.

Congratulations Amanda

Long standing friend of the WSGC, professional guitarist and former local girl Amanda Cook gave birth to a daughter on 4th March – a sister for Olive. The club sends our best wishes to everyone.

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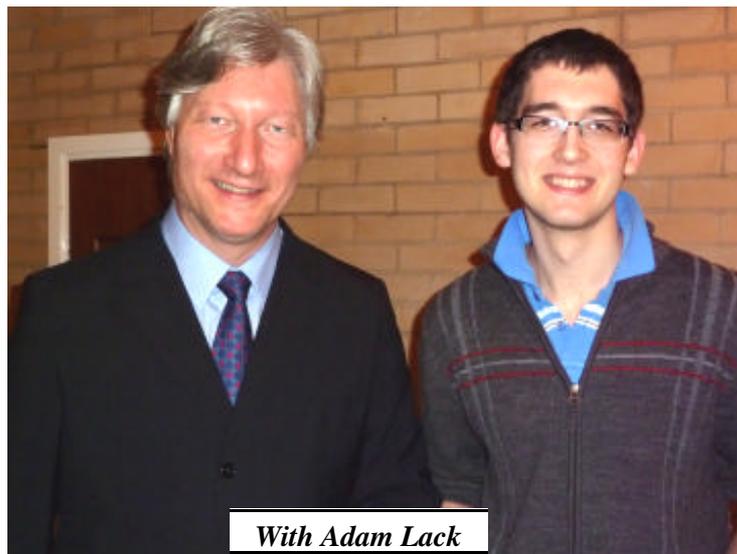
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Fabio meets Jenney Craven



With Adam Lack



With Charlie Elliott



Fabio enjoys his playing



With Debbie & Diana



Fabio demonstrates that Fandabbydosy chord

Fabio Zanon Concert 12th March 2011

Fabio Zanon Concert



Probably our largest audience to date braved the wind and rain to come and see Fabio play on our stage once more. Fabio is a long standing friend of the club and in fact gave the club's first ever professional concert way back in 1994. He was last here in 2007, where as always, he wowed the audience and his latest concert was no exception. Fabio said that he had probably performed more times in Bognor Regis than anywhere else in the world.

Fabio began his programme with five pieces by Sor. One cannot help but admire Sor for his superb contribution to the guitar repertoire. A unique pioneer of the instrument, he came from a time when he had so many brilliant contemporaries such as Schubert, so he had much to live up to! The rest of the first half was devoted to Ponce's 20 variations on *Folia d'España and Fugue*. Fabio said that Ponce was one of the greatest 20th Century composers for the guitar. He collaborated a lot with Segovia who would always play one of his pieces in every recital

(Continued on page 14)

Dates for your Diary

Mar	26th	Club Evening with Natalia Lipnitskaya	Jun	4th	Richard Smith/Julie Adams Concert
Apr	30th	John Mills/Cobie Smit Concert	Jul	2nd	Summer Party (invitation only)
May	14th	Club Evening with Steve Higgs flamenco			

Most events take place on Saturdays at 7.30pm in the Regis School of Music, 46 Sudley Road, Bognor Regis PO21 1ER. For details phone 01243 866462. For concert tickets phone 01243 866605 or visit the **Ticket Hotline** at www.westsussexguitar.com

Please send contributions for the next edition of *Good Vibrations* by **10th July** to Terry Woodgate, 3, East Ave., Middleton on Sea, West Sussex PO22 6EG tel: 01243 583355 or e-mail to: terry_woodgate@btinternet.com

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

