



The twenty fifth West Sussex Guitar Festival was held the first weekend in November. The club was delighted that Emmanuel Sowicz, following on from a wonderful concert in May, kindly agreed to adjudicate. Emmanuel is a laureate of numerous prestigious prizes and his success, by a unanimous decision, at the London International Guitar Competition in 2018, led him to becoming a EuroStrings artist. A European tour across eight countries and the opportunity to adjudicate at

festivals for aspiring professional guitarists swiftly followed. Adjudicating at a festival for children and enthusiastic adult amateur guitarists was a new experience for him but as the weekend unfolded it was a role he embraced with a gentle enthusiasm, auditory acuity and words carefully selected for the level, age and aspirations of the entrant.

There were some absolutely delightful performances by junior guitarists aged from eight to eighteen who all appeared quite at ease on the stage. Some performances involved just walking two fingers from one string to the next but made music out of such a simple exercise. Emmanuel gave some sound advice on planting the fingers on the strings and then walk them from one string to another in much the same way we would move from one foot to another whilst walking.



His advice on stage presentation was pertinent to both children and adults and encouraged us to see that our role is to engage with an audience and that there are three stages to a performance. An interesting and informative introduction about the piece and the composer whets the listeners appetite and begins to draw them into a world the performer wishes to create. Jacob Wells-Luttrell's preface to Heitor Villa-Lobos's Prelude no.3 was excellent. Written as a homage to Bach the opening series of ascending intervals ending on chords represents the recitative, a musical declamation, which is then followed by the

aria, which in this case was a plaintive soulful melody.

George Vears followed with his interesting description of Villa-Lobos's Prelude no.4, also known as 'Homanagen ao indio brasileiro' where the distinctive melody is influenced by Brazilian folksong with a small melodic range and simple rhythms. Elaine Foakes gave a humorous introduction to the Prelude no.1 by stating 'You can never have enough Villa-Lobos!' She then explained that Villa-Lobos started with the cello, which developed his love of Bach, and then learned the guitar, which allowed him to take folk

and popular music to the concert hall. Elaine explained that this was the reverse of her musical education whereby she was encouraged to learn the cello as a second instrument as it was considered to have more gravitas than the guitar. Her second piece 'Sugarloaf Mountain' by Gary Ryan came at a time when the classical guitar was firmly established as a serious instrument and compositions could return to the folk idiom.



The second stage of a performance is the actual playing of a piece and Emmanuel advised us to walk confidently onto the stage, however nervous you might feel, turn to the audience and give a preliminary small bow. It is important to connect with the audience and to appear excited to share your music and hold their attention with your body language. The best performance anyone can give is to emulate the human voice as much as possible and this can

be done with appropriate phrasing, use of vibrato and to slide from one note to another. He advised Peter Russell to look up at the end of playing and appreciate the audience and how one special moment such as highlighting the high E on the Bach section of Villa-Lobos's Prelude no.3 can go a long way. An 'unethical' tip was to never mention that you have skipped a section. The final stage of a performance is of course the smile and the bow, a common mantra expressed enthusiastically by Sasha.



The early music section brought forth music by composers less well-known to some of us but influential nonetheless. Jay Huff played the first ever set of variations on a theme by Girolamo Frescobaldi, a composer much admired by J.S.Bach and his performance altered our perceptions of early music of being slightly dry. Jacob Wells-Luttrell performed music by Vincenzo Capriola, an Italian composer and lutenist, and written in tablature, known to acoustic guitarists but often frowned upon for its lack of sophistication. Emmanuel stated that it is more demanding to use than common notation as it is almost written as a code, with less information. Jacob gave an outstanding performance of this often less accessible music.

This year's festival was brimming with new compositions demonstrating the breadth of creativity that lies within the club. David Alexander gave his debut festival performance in both the Intermediate and Composition classes playing 'Snowfall' and 'One Minute to Midnight' in the former and 'Dark Waters', describing the futility of war, in the latter. Linda Kelsall-Barnett performed her own compositions, both influenced by nature and English folk songs. The first, 'The Cuckoo and the Chiff-Chaff', was written after a country walk and is based on a Sussex folksong whereby the cuckoo



attempts to lay an egg in the chaff-chaff's nest. Her 'Folksong Fantasy' featured the Sussex melody 'A Brisk Young Sailor Courtied Me' whose infidelity brought about the death of the young woman and his own heart, which was later filled with remorse. The second was based on 'The Fair Flower of Northumberland' but interlaced with the story of the recently felled sycamore tree along Hadrian's wall, the dropping of its leaves in autumn but the regenerative power of nature when new buds grow.

Andrew Richardson performed a wide array of his excellent arrangements which continues to grow. Inspired by the singing of school hymns he performed arrangements of 'Gwahoddiaid' (Dyma Fi), 'Calon Lan' and 'Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau' (the Welsh national anthem) for the recital class. He composed a series called 'Chalton Down', and 'Directions' reflecting the journey of life (and possibly walking on the Downs!) and performed two movements from each with Jay Huff in the duet class. Having arranged all of Guitar Harmony's repertoire in the Ensemble class Emmanuel encouraged him to continue with his arrangements. The New Gala Quartet performed two excellent arrangements by Debbie Burford - 'Serenata' and 'Plink Plank Plunk' by Leroy Anderson - as well as 'Por Una Cabeza' by Carlos Gardel.



This year's twenty fifth festival was poignant and memorable following the sad passing of Sasha but also for new and positive additions. Three new entrants gave sterling debut performances - new club member Paul Nowlan who has only recently started playing the guitar, Peter Counihan who dived in at the deep end of performing by entering the Advanced and Recital classes and David Alexander who is demonstrating great compositional skills. David Clarke returned to the stage after a brief hiatus and performed two pieces from Torroba's 'Castles of Spain' and 'Circles End' by Steve Marsh. Harri Goldsmith entered the festival at short notice and Baz Boxall and Teresa Henley gave their debut duet performance.



Congratulations must go to Jacob Wells-Luttrell who astounded us all, including Emmanuel, with the breadth and the quality of his guitar playing and at only sixteen years of age. There were some excellent performances in the junior section including Torrin Ayling plus dad, who played in the family ensemble, and Seren Mathias who won no fewer than four trophies! Sofia Carson's performance of 'Lagrima', a firm favourite of Sasha's, did bring tears to our eyes. Guitar Harmony directed by Andrew Richardson and the West Sussex Guitar Orchestra directed by Linda Kelsall-Barnett received 'outstanding' marks for their performances.

The recent sad passing of Sasha meant that new skills in organising the festival needed to be swiftly acquired. Debbie Burford valiantly sifted through emails from entrants, replied to them and formulated the schedule for both days, filmed the proceedings, took photos and smoothed over any ruffled feathers. Linda Kelsall-Barnett took up the challenging role of introducing each performer, and making sure that we kept to time

and things ran smoothly. Much behind the scenes work was undertaken by club chairman Julian Bobak who accompanied Emmanuel in the junior section and ensured that the right cup was given to the right child. In addition, thanks must go to Teresa Henley who not only ensured that Emmanuel was provided with timely refreshments but also looked after the rehearsal rooms, and to David Clarke who took the monies on the door.

We were all gratified and impressed by the presence and adjudicating skills of Emmanuel who underwent his first amateur guitar festival with such calm, understanding and great musical insights that many entrants are already requesting a return! His feedback was so insightful and encouraging such that our performances at the club evening the following week showed signs of improvement. And for the first time ever we had an adjudicator who brought not only his father, but his dog, Luna the Chihuahua, as companions!



Lastly we must thank Nina, Yuli and Inna without whom the festival would not have happened; we are so grateful. The festival was a celebration of the love and passion for the guitar and music that Sasha shared with the Regis School of Music and all its members. As Nina turned round from the adjudicator's table to thank us she smiled and said 'Sasha would be a happy man.'

Teresa Henley

	25th WSGC Festival - Junior Classes	Winner
4	<i>Solo, Age 12 & under (Grade II & under)</i>	Ocean Bonnaray
6	<i>Solo, Age 15 & under (Grade V & under)</i>	Athalie Leney
7	<i>Solo, Age 15 & under (Grade VI & above)</i>	Seren Mathias
8	<i>Technical perfection I, Age 12 & under</i>	Seren Mathias
10	<i>Bach Class I</i>	Seren Mathias
14	<i>Junior Recital I</i>	Seren Mathias
28	<i>Family Ensemble</i>	Torrin Ayling
9	<i>Technical Perfection II, Age 13 to 18</i>	Vakaris Silaikis
13	<i>Advanced Open Class, Age 18 & under</i>	Sofia Carson
19	<i>Guitar Duet, Age 18 & under</i>	Sofia Carson & Vakaris Silaikis

	25th WSGC Festival - Senior Classes	Winner
60	<i>Guitar Ensemble</i>	Guitar Harmony
60a	<i>Guitar Orchestra</i>	WSGC Orchestra
50	<i>Senior Novice</i>	Paul Nowlan
51	<i>Solo Intermediate I, up to Grade 3</i>	Harri Goldsmith
52	<i>Solo Intermediate II, Grade 4 & above</i>	Teresa Henley
53	<i>Early Music Class</i>	Jacob Wells-Luttrell
54	<i>Bach Class (Open)</i>	George Vears
55	<i>Music Around the World</i>	Jay Huff
58	<i>Guitar Duet</i>	Jay Huff & Andrew Richardson
59	<i>Guitar Trio or Quartet</i>	New Gala Quartet
64	<i>Arrangement Class</i>	Debbie Burford
C-2	<i>Composition Class I, solo or duet</i>	Linda Kelsall-Barnett
56	<i>Advanced Class</i>	Jacob Wells-Luttrell
63	<i>Recital Class (Open)</i>	Linda Kelsall-Barnett (Runner-up Jacob Wells-Luttrell)