

◆ Classical Guitar Society of Washington, D.C. ◆

No. 13

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March Program

Flamenco Guitar with Paco de Málaga

The society's featured artist in March is the noted flamenco guitarist Paco de Málaga. Málaga was born in the town of Málaga in 1937 in the Andalusian region of Spain. Both his uncle and grandfather played guitar, and it was from his uncle that Málaga took his first guitar lessons. More lessons followed with Antonio Sanchez, the father of Paco de Lucia, considered by Málaga to be the best flamenco guitarist playing today.

Most of Málaga's training in flamenco came from the experience he gained playing in flamenco companies in Spain that combine the guitar, singing, and dance. No one knows how flamenco began; it is a combination of many musical traditions, Málaga points out, with a strong Arabic influence.

Following his marriage to the noted flamenco dancer, Anna Martinez, Málaga moved to Brazil in 1957, and performed with his wife and son in Brazil, Spain, the United States and Canada. A one-year contract to perform in Montreal led to a three-month engagement in Washington, D.C., beginning in 1973. The three-month engagement lasted seven years.

Seven years ago, Málaga opened the Guitar Gallery on Connecticut Avenue, but he still performs every night except Sunday, 8 p.m. to 10 p.m., at the El Bodegon restaurant at 17th and R Streets, NW.

Paco de Málaga has made two recordings of flamenco music and has an offer to make another recording.

Calendar of Events

Mar 12 - Paco de Málaga, flamenco guitar, 2:00 p.m. at the Little Falls Public Library, 5501 Massachusetts Avenue, Bethesda, Maryland. FREE. **Guitar society elections at 1:00 p.m.** Information: (301) 495-2703

Mar 26 - Paco de Málaga, 8:00 p.m. at the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland. Information: (410) 242-2744.

Apr 9 - The Alexandria Quartet featuring John Graham, 2:00 p.m. at the Little Falls Public Library, 5501 Massachusetts Avenue, Bethesda, Maryland. FREE. Information: (301) 495-2703.

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April Program

The Alexandria Quartet Featuring John Graham

In April, the guitar society is proud to present the Alexandria Guitar Quartet featuring John Graham in solo recital. Graham currently is an instructor at Lake Braddock Secondary School in Burke, Virginia, where he teaches beginning and intermediate guitar and music theory classes as well as conducting a 17-member guitar ensemble. He holds an associate degree in fine arts and jazz studies from the Community College of Rhode Island, where he studied with Nancy Carroll and Paul Murphy, and a bachelor of music degree from the University of Rhode Island, where he studied with Daniel Salazar. Graham also studied with the late John Marlow (continued on page 2)

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(Quartet, from page 1) and is pursuing a master's degree in guitar performance at George Mason University. Graham recently joined the Alexandria Guitar Quartet, which has been performing in the Washington, D.C., area for the past two years.

The Alexandria Guitar Quartet consists of John Graham, Timothy Evans, Jeffrey Baker, and Sean Dodson. Timothy Evans is working toward a bachelor of music degree in guitar performance at George Mason University and will graduate in the spring of 1994. He was a finalist in the Philadelphia Classical Guitar Society Solo Competition for 1993. Evans currently teaches classical guitar at Sterling Academy of Music.

Jeffrey Baker earned a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering with a minor in music from Virginia Tech University in 1986, where he studied string bass with Patrick Simpson. He is currently studying at George Mason University for a master's degree in guitar performance. Baker currently teaches guitar at Wakefield and Providence Recreation Centers in Fairfax County.

Sean Dodson earned an associate degree in music from Northern Virginia Community College and will receive his bachelor of music degree in guitar performance from George Mason University in the spring of 1994. In 1993, he was chosen to perform in the George Mason Concerto Recital. Dodson currently teaches classical

guitar at the Fairfax Conservatory of Music and Art, and at the Columbia Institute of Fine Arts.

The Alexandria Guitar Quartet has a diverse repertoire including music from Brazil, the Middle East, Europe, and the United States. The quartet has been chosen to perform with the George Mason Orchestra in the 1994 George Mason Concerto Recital. Three members of the quartet were winners in the 1993 Montpelier Cultural Arts Center Recital Series as a trio guitar ensemble. They were also chosen as finalists in the 1993 D'Addario National Guitar Summer Workshop Ensemble Competition. All the members of the Alexandria Guitar Quartet study guitar with Jeffrey Meyerreicks.

For the April 9 program, John Graham will perform solo works by Torroba, Zenaman, Bogdanovic, and Rak. The quartet will perform works by Telemann, Ayton, Haydn, Ravel, and Boccherini.

Society Officers

The Classical Guitar Society of Washington, D.C.

President: Morey Rothberg
(301) 495-2703
Vice-Pres.: Steven Seidenman
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Treasurer: Mark Lewonowski

Articles and announcements relating to the classical guitar should be sent to the Publisher, Classical Guitar Society of Washington, D.C., 1001 Spring Street, No. 726 Silver Spring, MD 20910 □

Guitar Society Program in February Snowed Out!

Ice, snow, and sleet forced the guitar society to cancel its February 12 program on guitar-making by Thomas Rein, and the scheduled election of new officers. All Montgomery Country libraries were closed on February 12, and we know that many people were both disappointed and inconvenienced. The elections will be held at 1:00 on March 12, prior to our program by Paco de Málaga, and we will re-schedule Thomas Rein's presentation. Apologies to everyone! See you in March.

Join the Classical Guitar Society of Washington, D.C. ! Application, p.5.

A Model of Excellence: Christopher Parkening Visits George Mason University

By Steven Seidenman

Given my track record for Christopher Parkening reviews, it should come as no surprise that I would include here that of his latest Washington, D.C., area recital (at least at the time of this writing), which took place on January 16 at the George Mason University for the Performing Arts.

Vintage Parkening through and through (he is now old enough to warrant the term), the recital opened with delightful transcriptions of lute music by Praetorius and Dowland, followed appropriately enough by exemplary renditions of Bach. (Continued, page 3)

(Parkening, from page 2)

The program also included three anonymous Renaissance lute duets and duets by Falla, York, and Castelnuovo-Tedesco, performed with the help of Parkening's long-time "assisting artist," the excellent guitarist David Brandon.

At one point, the duet sounded like a veritable Renaissance consortium, as the precisely synchronized percussive effects and the equally distributed sequence of chord progressions instantaneously unfolded before one's eyes (or ears).

Parkening has always demonstrated an affinity for Bach, and an intuitive sense of how to render his music convincingly on the guitar. Yet he is equally adept at the Segovian repertoire; his uncanny sense of phrasing and judicious (sometimes) use of "rubato" technique are almost worthy of his time-honored mentor.

Perhaps surprisingly in Parkening's case, the evening did not lack its precarious moments, e.g., toward the end of Bach's popular Cantata No. 147 ("Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring") in the full chordal passages; in Bach's Prelude No. 1 ("The Well-Tempered Clavier"), for which a string or two hadn't been adequately re-tuned for the key in question (the "re-tune while you play" trick, employed often enough by Parkening, is obviously next to impossible in a piece like that); and in Giuliani's "Handel Variations," a piece he

was apparently reading from and did not seem too at ease with, as the fast last variation and finale seemed to nearly get away from him, spectacular though that may have appeared. And I suppose we may forgive his omission of the intricate fourth variation, a common practice with the piece.

At any rate, the remaining portion of the program more than made up for such moments. I was particularly impressed by his reading of Bach's Prelude from the Cello Suite No. 1, and the three movements from Tansman's "Suite in Modo Polonico." His Villa-Lobos was also quite remarkable, in a class by itself (his Villa-Lobos has always struck me as such in concert).

The performance of the Bach cello prelude was far superior to his recording of it, which after all he made when he was only 20, on his debut album, *In the Classic Style*. His performance of the piece was not merely technically perfect and expressive. It embodied a feeling of Bachian joy and grace unlike any I've ever heard in the many renditions of the piece, and hung together seamlessly from the first note to the last. It virtually made one forget that it was a transcription, no matter how familiar with the cello version. A true justification of the practice of transcription if I ever heard one.

The Tansman pieces were performed in a very authentic style, i.e., somewhat like Segovia's version (which I have heard performed in concert more than once), since they were

written for him. That is not to say that Parkening's own virtues did not come through. In fact, for all the Segovian elegance and aesthetic evident in Parkening's playing, there is a sense of youthful spontaneity and vigor about it which readily distinguishes it, a happy blend of something of the old and something of the new. Perhaps that is part of his secret.

After congratulating the artists on their superb performance, and expressing to Parkening my enthusiasm for his artistry, I inquired about upcoming projects he might want to discuss. He gladly offered the following:

- (1) A world premiere recording of Peter Warlock's "Concerto Capriole" for guitar and strings, arranged by Patrick Russ from the orchestral version, following the success of his arrangement of William Walton's "Five Bagatelles for Guitar and Orchestra," recorded by Parkening last year, along with the Rodrigo concertos [see the review of this CD in our May 1993 issue]; Vivaldi concertos will also be included.
- (2) A second volume of "A Tribute to Segovia."
- (3) A Christmas album with Kathleen Battle (his second recording collaboration with the soprano; he has collaborated with her many more times).
- (4) A new guitar method book, co-authored with David Brandon.

If only he had time for "more projects."

Want to join a guitar ensemble? Call Cate Fleming at (202) 546-8364.

Playing Without Pain-I
by Alicia Kopfstein-Penk

Playing guitar is not supposed to hurt. It's really not even supposed to be uncomfortable! Yet some people endure pain every time they play. Such suffering is not a necessary part of being a guitarist. If ignored, minor discomforts can lead to major injuries and possibly permanent disabilities. Even if you have no problems now, it may help to learn how to avoid them in the future.

I would like to share with you some information taken from my interview with Dr. Richard Norris, Director of the new National Performing Arts Medical Center in Bethesda (his suggestions are indicated below by the initials RN), my article on a lecture by Janet Lisak, then Director of Occupational Therapy at Good Samaritan Hospital in Baltimore (JL), and my years of playing and teaching (AKP). The following comments assume a standard classical guitar sitting position. Since a blunt approach is easiest to follow, here goes.

- 1) Take a five minute break every 30 minutes. The human body poorly tolerates doing the same thing over and over again without stopping. (RN & JL)
- 2) Never "go for the burn"; it damages muscles. Stop playing when you feel a burning sensation in the muscles, then begin again when they feel better. Stop-and-go builds stamina without damaging tissue.

3) Practice a difficult passage for only one minute. Go do something else and return later as many times as you wish. Dr. Norris says guitarists tend to practice a difficult passage that lasts one second for as much as a half hour, then wonder why their hands hurt! Avoid repetitive motion syndrome. (RN)

4) Keep your left wrist relatively straight at all times. In *Learning the Classical Guitar*, Aaron Shearer says: "Muscles function most efficiently when the joints they control are operated within their midrange of movement." The wrist should not regularly be bent extremely either in or out. One way to see whether your wrist is bent too much is to look in a mirror or plate glass window.

Of course, your wrist must bend slightly when barring, playing above the twelfth fret or reaching to the lower strings, but you can minimize this by dropping your left elbow/shoulder or raising the guitar a little. Talk to your teacher to make sure you don't overdo and cause a different problem. Make certain the head of the guitar is high enough. Most left wrist problems are caused by a guitar neck that is too low. A left wrist which is bent at nearly right angles is a common cause of tendonitis or carpal tunnel syndrome. Avoid it at all costs. (AKP)

5) Use as little force as possible with the left hand. When most guitarists hear a buzz, they increase pressure. Don't make that your first solution. Make

sure your fingers are curled and close to the frets before you push harder. Your thumb generally should be between the 1st and 2nd fingers pushing as little as possible. One way to practice minimum pressure is to press so little when you play that you get thinking sounds instead of notes, then add just enough pressure to produce a clear sound. (AKP)

Look for more ideas in part 2 of "Playing Without Pain." If you have any questions, feel free to call me at (301) 564-1467. (To be continued next issue.)

Alicia Kopfstein-Penk has taught guitar and various music courses at the Annandale Campus of Northern Virginia Community College for nearly 15 years. She has a bachelor's and master of arts degree in music from American University and has nearly completed her doctorate at Catholic University. In addition to a busy teaching and performing schedule, she has published articles in *Classical Guitar*, *Guitar Review*, and *Soundboard* about guitar technique.

Attention Guitar Enthusiasts! Share your knowledge of guitar technique and music. Consider writing an article for this newsletter on the classical guitar. Maximum length: two double-spaced pages. Submissions on diskette (PC compatible, WordPerfect 5.1) are especially appreciated. Publisher's address on page 2.

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