



The Berkshire Guitar Society

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BGS Summer Bbq - 11th July

As I was on holiday at the time, my thanks to George MacDonald for the following.

In a summer dogged by poor weather we were delighted that it remained warm and dry for this year's BBQ. Attendance was very good and it was great to see so many family attendees there. Robert even brought his French mother-in-law, and she seemed to enjoy herself, as did his young French nephew who certainly held our attention, occasionally with small flying stones!

From the conversation I heard our "other-halves" would prefer that we practice a bit less, but if we have to practice then a bit less repetition and deviation would be welcomed, also a bit more happy music would be nice. Come on "other-halves", a bit more encouragement please!

I didn't hear all of the music, but I know that Robert, John, Bob, (the proof's below - Ed) Yvonne and Gary played, not sure about Michelle and Tim, and I was too cowardly on this occasion.



For me the stars of the show were Steve and his two sons playing some easy listening, bluesy music. I would be interested to know what the "other-halves" thought.

Bob and Amanda certainly did us proud. A big thank you to them for welcoming us in their wonderful home and for preparing all the extra side dishes that make the difference for a fine banquet and social occasion. Let's hope that next year's is no less enjoyable.

George MacDonald



From the summer bbq:

*host Bob Harrison
with John Parr and
Robert Brown (column
1) and preparing to
solo (left).*

Workshop with Ray Burley - 25th July

As it has been some years since the Society organised a workshop, it was with some trepidation as well as expectation that we viewed the event as it approached.

We needn't have worried - 15 participants turned up at the appointed time, 11.00 am at SHP and we were directed to our now familiar venue in the Dance Studio. After introductions we took the chance to get the kettle we had brought along into action and suitably armed with our "elevenses" we settled down to hear what our maestro for the day, Ray Burley, had to say.

There followed $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour or so of technical advice and discussion which covered a number of highly relevant subjects to players of all grades. It may be useful to summarise them here (at least as I understood them!).

With a reminder of the need for an adequate "warm up" and that it is the right hand that actually makes the music, Ray reminded us of the benefit of arpeggios as a place to start. We then moved on to the vexed subject of scales - in Ray's view, these are of limited value due to the way in which they are played as repeating patterns up and down the fretboard.

Better to play simple 3 note fragments of scales (eg b-c-d / c-d-e) ensuring that they are played with alternating fingers.

Another favourite subject, how to improve sight reading was next and Ray offered us advice on how to deal with the two aspects - how to find the notes, and how to get the rhythm correct. The latter can be approached by playing repeated single notes in the rhythm of a piece, and the former by playing a simple phrase repeatedly in different positions. Another way of dealing with "finding the notes" is with the use of a metronome - play a single note a set number of times, then play the same note in a different position, and move onto a new note when you run out of positions.

We were then ready to move on to our piece for the day. This was the Suite Francaise by Francis Poulenc, who died in the mid 1960's, and assembled a collection of Renaissance dances mostly written in the 16th century by Claude Gervaise. In the course of doing so Poulenc introduced a number of "interesting harmonies" which occur throughout the suite. The work has been further arranged by Ray in 4 guitar parts, the form in which we were using it.

We started with the 7th movement of the Suite, the Carillon, the energetic tempo requiring us to shed any lethargy remaining from the previous session. We then moved on to 3 of the other movements, and under Ray's expert guidance the group was beginning to produce some very pleasing results. The format seemed to be working well, with the "leaders" of the group playing each part having a go at the relevant movement first, followed by all the players.

At about 1:00 pm we broke for lunch. We came together again for a masterclass session. This commenced with myself playing Maximo Pujol's Prelude Triston, followed by Yvonne D'Souza with Torroba's Arada, Dave Stinchcombe playing the Rumba from Castelnuovo-Tedesco's Appunti, then Richard Barbosa with Andrew York's Sunburst. All were treated to the benefit of Ray's highly constructive advice on playing the piece, and along the way to some fascinating background in particular about Segovia.

We resumed our ensemble playing with the remaining movements of the Suite Francaise, and were able to run through all

7 movements to demonstrate in full the product of our day's labours.

This still left time for a final masterclass session with Lee Boyes playing Waltons 3rd Bagatelle (Alla Cubana), who received the same level of comment from Ray and I know that one particular piece of advice Lee found to be with the entrance fee on it's own!

Many thanks to Ray Burley for his input into a day which was as successful as we could have hoped for, and also to the participants without whose efforts (on the day and with all that practice beforehand!) success would not have been achieved.

BGS members present were Gary Jordan, Richard Butters, Michelle Cole, Yvonne D'Souza, Tim Parke, Richard Barbosa, Alan du Feu, Graham Cooper, Dave Fiennes, and myself. We were pleased to welcome for the day Dave Stinchcombe, Cheryl Slater, Sue Antell, Lee Boyes and Sian Burley - we hope to see at least some of you again at the Society!

Graham Cooper has kindly provided a "participant's view" of the workshop which is circulated separately.

Ray Burley Recital

At 7.30 in the evening, we resumed in the much more impressive surroundings of the Recital Room to hear Ray in recital mode. For this we were joined by a satisfactory influx of other concert goers, so that the audience very nearly filled the room.

Ray played us a varied programme and as Graham Cooper has kindly provided us with a review of the recital (circulated separately) I will simply list the programme for the record:

J S Bach	Andante from BWV 1003
Sanz	Four Dances
Weiss	Tombeau on the death of Count Logy
De Falla	Homenaje @ Debussy
Sor	Largo from Opus 7 Minuet from Opus 25
Biberian	Spring Song
Theodorakis	Three Epitafios

Interval

Barrios	Gavotte Christmas Carol Julia Florida
Maximo Pujol	Three Preludes
Villa Lobos	Valsa Choro Prelude No. 3 Choro No. 1

Ray's recital was very well received and he deserved his encore. On a personal note, it was good to hear my Masterclass piece from earlier in the day (Pujol's Prelude Triston) being played as it should. The only sour note was our inability on a warm and humid evening to exclude the noises "off stage" from the terrace outside the bar downstairs. However this did not detract from a most enjoyable evening.

BGS news

NEXT MEETING

The society's next meeting will be on Sunday September 12th, starting at 7.30 pm at SHP. This is a members evening, with "early music" as the theme. There are probably many possible definitions of "early music" however for our purposes this can be taken as meaning "pre Bach" ie before about 1650. So why not look out some suitable material and come along and play?

COMING MEETINGS

Don't forget we have a busy schedule during October and November - see the July newsletter for details if you have forgotten. I wonder how those entries for the Composition competition are coming on?

"Other News", "Web site of the month" and "And Finally .."

will make their re-appearance in future issues.