



The Berkshire Guitar Society

www.berkshireguitar.freemove.co.uk



Newsletter No 135

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A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL READERS!!

December meeting

Our Christmas meeting on December 9th kicked off with the big decisions about our composition competition. To remind readers of the rules, £15 prizes were on offer for the winner in each of the following categories:

- Best composition for one or more guitars on the theme of the potato;
- Best arrangement for two or more guitars.

After putting together a quartet from those available to play the only entry in the 2nd category, followed by a quick rehearsal, we were then treated to Graham Cooper's arrangement of "A Little Fugue" by Domenico Zipoli, (1688 - 1726), an Italian composer of mainly church music who studied with Alessandro Scarlatti (father of the harpsichordist) among others.

This done, we were then able to move on to the 3 entrants in the potato category. First we had James Wankling playing his "Una Patata en una cubeta" ("A spud in a bucket", in James' translation), a highly idiosyncratic and entertaining composition.

James was followed by George Macdonald, who played us his competition entry "Maris Piper's Fancy", a short piece which to me hinted at the "Elizabethan Fancy" suggested by the title. George then treated us to "Ballade of 47", the title referring to the Irish famine of that time. This was an evocative piece of several sections, very Celtic in style, the slow theme of which certainly suggested the problems of the period. George, being an honest fellow, didn't enter this piece into the competition as he had continued working on it after the closing date for the competition.

Lastly, we heard an entry from Graham Cooper, who had cleverly constructed a short theme from the letters of the word "potato" and also gave us "variations" entitled

"Quiz - which potato" (answer - Red - given away by the "red flag" melody), the (deliberately) unplayable "New Potato", an Elgaresque "King Edward", a "Maris Piper" and "Mash Potato" where one could respectively hear the pipes being played, and the scrape of the masher in the pan.

This left Ivan Andrews entry, "Maris Pipers Mash". However as this composition is of a high enough quality to have been played recently by the Rosewood Trio to a paying audience, it was thought best to put it into a category of its own and to leave the prize money to be fought over by ordinary mortals.

We were all deprived of our "and the winner is ..." moment until the end of the evening, to allow suitable time for deliberation.

The slot after an interval spent destroying some seasonal goodies including a very nice Brie, was intended to have been filled by Paul Miron, who unfortunately couldn't be with us, so we moved on to musical offerings from those present.

Steve Tucker started us off with a very nice rendition of Barrios' Villancico de Navidad, to be followed by Andy Scott with 4 Sevillanas. Andy is to be heard regularly these days playing flamenco at various locations around Reading, if you want to go and see him in action then email Andy on Andrew.Scott@Madge.com.

Gary Jordan played us 3 pieces, a French Carol called "Quitter Pasteurs" (I think), an arrangement of "God Rest ye Merry Gentlemen" and "A Winter Idyll", a piece by Stephen Lane which Gary told us he finds himself regularly drawn back to at this time of year. I then played a version of "Rudolph the Red nosed Reindeer", to be known henceforth as "Ragtime Rudolph", and Graham Cooper and I then played Graham's arrangement of

"We wish you a Merry Christmas". The playing was brought to a close by Steve Tucker with Barrios' Danza Paraguaya.

On a personal note it was a welcome surprise to be presented with a very nice bottle of Spanish red for my efforts with the newsletter - it's nice to know that one's contribution is appreciated!

The evening closed with the counting of the votes and announcement of the competition winners. Unsurprisingly Graham Cooper achieved 100% of the vote in the "best arrangement" category, and also came first with his "potato theme". Graham made the admirable decision to donate his winnings to charity, gifting 2 goats named Tarrega and Barrios to the 3rd World via CAFOD.

And thus 2004 ended for the BGS on a suitably high note.

BGS news

NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting is on January 9th, and will be an ensemble session - usual time, 7.30 at South Hill Park. So if those fingers have been given a bit of a rest during the Christmas break, and even they've been kept busy, then come along and have some fun.

AMANDA COOK CONCERT

A reminder about this concert by one of the UK's best young performers:

Date: Saturday 29th January

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Venue: The Recital Room, South Hill Park,

Title: The Many Faces of the Guitar

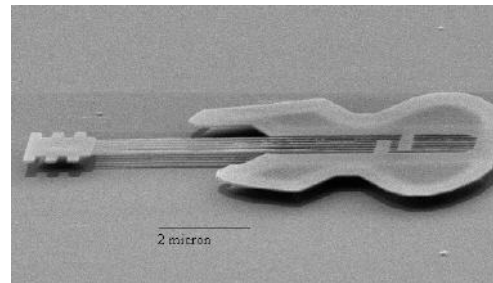
Tickets: Adults £7, Berkshire Guitar Society Members £6, Under 16's £3.

This a BGS organised event, so let's hope it's as successful as the last one! Given the experience of some of us at the Paul Miron / Rosewood Trio concert, don't forget to book to your tickets in advance from the SHP box office on 01344 484123.

Other News

LITTLE AND LARGE

A while back Gary Jordan provided a link to a picture of what must be the smallest guitar in the world :



The size of this wonder is 10 millionth of a metre - about the size of a red blood cell. Needless to say we're talking here about nano-technology.

From one extreme to the other, courtesy of Graham



Cooper, who came across a picture of a rather larger guitar 5.8 metres long from New South Wales in Australia (see bottom of previous column).



Then in 2000 a Texan high school (where else?) built a 43 feet, 7 1/2 inches long and 16 feet, 5 1/2 inches wide, monster of a Jimmi Hendrix Flying V (left): it weighs 2244 lbs. and uses 8-inch thick, 25-foot long strings (thanks again to Graham).

The strings of this giant are very low frequency because they can't be wound up tight enough and the electronics actually has to do its stuff to produce a sound .

Interestingly, this compares with our nano guitar, where the strings at a thickness of 50 billionth of a meter (if they could be played!) would produce an inaudible high pitched sound at a frequency of 10 megahertz.

Anyone know of any larger or smaller specimens than these?

Web site of the Month and And Finally ...

Will re-appear in future editions.