



The Berkshire Guitar Society

www.berkshireguitar.freemove.co.uk



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Our first meeting of 2005 was advertised as an ensemble session but yet again we demonstrated our flexibility in these matters by starting off with a very nicely played duet from Debbie Haeck and Steve Christmas, in the form of the second of "6 Small Duets" (opus 34) by Carulli.

We then followed our usual format for an ensemble session and having raided the library, broke into groups to prepare our pieces prior to coming back together after an interval.

When we resumed, first away were Graham Cooper, John Parr, Alan du Feu, George MacDonald and Jeremy Allison, who played us "Grandfathers Clock" and "In an English Country Garden", both arrangements by Bob Power being well played by the group.

Next to pick up their guitars were Gary Jordan, Bob Harrison and myself, who were brave enough to attempt a volume of short pieces by mid 20th century German composers which had lain in the library unused for many years. A cynic might say that there was good reason for this lack of use, but as we attempted "Einspiel" from Kindertrio by Rudolf Wagner Regeny, and the Allegro Marcia from "4 miniatures for guitar trio" by Gunter Hahnefeld, enough was heard to suggest that this music should see much more use in the future.

Our 3rd group saw Richard Butters playing John Duarte's "Little Suite" with Debbie Haeck and Steve Christmas. Given the recent death of the composer, this formed a BGS tribute to Duarte, and very good it sounded too, not least considering the minimal time available for rehearsal.

This brought us to the end of our ensemble work, and the opportunity was taken by Steve Christmas to play us some solo pieces, firstly the Prelude and Andante from Barrios'

"La Catedral", and then Villa Lobos' "Mazurka Choro", with an added introduction over the normal published version.

BGS news

NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting is on Sunday February 13th, (07.30 pm at the South Hill Park Centre as usual) and is the Society AGM followed by a Members Evening.

Apart from the stuff that has to be done at an AGM, this is an opportunity to influence the course to be taken by the Society, which would also benefit greatly from new blood on the committee - we need some new ideas, folks!

So come along to the AGM, be prepared to make your views known, don't forget to bring your chequebook so that you can get the new year's subscriptions paid up, out of the way, and enjoy the BGS with your conscience clear.

The aim is to get the formal part of the meeting over as soon as possible so that we can have a short "members evening", so bring along something to play if that's your inclination.

AMANDA COOK CONCERT

On the evening of Saturday 29th January an audience of about 40 came along to the Recital Room at South Hill Park to hear Amanda Cooke.

Amanda has played for the Society before, but not in my time and as this was the first occasion on which I have heard her play, as soon as she commenced her recital with 3 Minuets by Fernando Sor, I knew we were

in for an excellent evening. What distinguishes her playing from other performers I have heard is the range of colours, expressiveness, touch and phrasing that she uses. Help was provided the acoustics, the properties of the Recital Room in this regard being commented upon favourably by Amanda,

After the Sor, we heard Rodrigo's "En Los Trigales", which succeeded in conveying the atmosphere of the worker's day in the fields, followed by Roland Dyen's arrangement of Satie's "Gnossienne No 1", a piece I hadn't heard on the guitar before and an arrangement which certainly worked well in her hands.

The first half of the performance was brought to an end by Brouwer's "El Decameron Negro", described by Amanda as one of the composer's "more lyrical" pieces, and the melody in the 3rd section ("Ballade of the maiden in love") sent us off for our interval drinks with a memorable tune in our heads

The 2nd half of Amanda's recital brought us 2 pieces by Tarrega, "Capricho Arabe" and the "Gran Vals". No doubt a number of us have attempted these pieces, but rather than being discouraged by hearing how they sound in a player like Amanda's hands, I found listening to her rendition a reminder to work on the feeling and contrast which can make such a difference.

The Tarrega was followed by two pieces by William Lovelady which were meant to be played together, "The Curlew" and "The White Stone". I doubt anyone in the audience had heard these pieces before, but the highly evocative "The Curlew" and the simple introduction of "The White Stone" which gave way to a very expressive and fluid tremolo section, meant that this music was instantly likeable and would surely grow on the listener.

The recital was brought to an end by a performance of Turina's Sonata op. 61. Amanda explained that this was

one of 5 pieces the composer wrote for the guitar, the others being based on folk music but this is in classical "sonata form" and formed a suitable "weighty" piece with which to end the recital, and one that I would very much like to hear again.

The encore, inevitable after such a performance, was Benjamin Verdery's "Milwaukee", a piece which as much fun to listen to as it obviously was for Amanda to play.

I left highly encouraged by the range of music that is available for our instrument, and by the wonderful sounds that it is capable of producing, at least in the hands of a practitioner as skilled as Amanda.

Other News

JOHN DUARTE 1919 - 2004

Mention has already been made of the recent death of "Jack" Duarte, whose contribution to 20th century classical guitar was enormous.

Duarte was known to our own Richard Butters, who suggests that there are likely to be a variety of celebrations of his life in coming months (perhaps including a concert in London), not to mention a great deal of comment and analysis in the CG magazines and elsewhere, so if Duarte's works are of interest to you then keep your eyes open.

BRITISH GUITAR MUSIC

Naxos have recently released a CD by Graham Devine of modern British guitar music which features:

Walton: 5 Bagatelles
Maxwell Davies: Farewell to Stromness
Rawsthorne: Elegy

Berkeley: Sonatina Op 52
Theme and Variations
Quatre Pieces
Bennett: Five Impromptus

This disc has been receiving some favourable reviews, so if you are interested you can go to Naxos and listen to track samples before deciding whether to buy (these days you have to subscribe to Naxos to listen to the complete tracks).

<http://www.naxos.com/mainsite/default.asp?pn=SimpleSearch>

Click on the link above and type the catalogue no 8.557040 into the Naxos search box. You will need to register before you can listen, but unless you wish to listen to the complete tracks this is free.

Web site of the Month

We don't have to go far for this one - but if you're like me you probably don't pay enough attention to our own Society's own website.

Our Webmaster Steve Tucker has been putting a lot of work into keeping the website up to date. The music page now includes some of the pieces from the Christmas meeting:

<http://www.berkshireguitar.freemove.co.uk/music.htm>

You may recall that during the early music meeting back in September last year, Steve Tucker played Mrs Taylor's Galliard by Philip Rosseter. When Graham Cooper later volunteered the information that Rosseter was an ancestor of his wife Sue, he kindly produced the piece on Rosseter that he was inevitably asked to provide. The web site page includes the short Rosseter song referred to in Graham's piece.