

Berkshire Guitar Society

www.berkshireguitarsociety.org.uk

www.myspace.com/berkshireguitarsociety

Newsletter No 170

May 2008

NEXT MEETING:

**SUNDAY 11TH MAY
SHP @ 7:30PM
ENSEMBLE EVENING
(SPANISH CIRCLE)**

UPCOMING EVENTS:

**FRIDAY 23RD MAY
READING @ 7:00PM
SPANISH CIRCLE**



BGS Meeting News

The focus of the Society's monthly meeting on Sunday April 13th was our performance for the Reading Spanish Circle in May. Under Richard Butter's guidance we worked through our two orchestra pieces, Derek Hasted's Fundango and Ian Gammie's Farruca, attempting to pay particular attention to the dynamics of our pieces. As always, more work to be done, but by May we'll hopefully be able to wow our audience.

We then heard some solos played with the Spanish Circle in mind. Michael Hickey played us Tarrega's Malaguena, I offered a milonga by Maximo Pujol called Septiembre, and Steve Tucker played a highly promising rendition of Granados' Danse Espagnol no 5.

Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be an ensemble evening and preparation for the Spanish circle on Sunday 11th May. Please could you let Gary know/ give an indication by then if you will be attending the Spanish Circle and if you will be playing any solos.

Upcoming Meetings

- Sunday May 11th - Members evening / Ensemble (Spanish Circle)
- Sunday June 8th - Orchestra evening.



Events Reviews

Arada Duo

The Arada Duo - Nicholas Lee and Simon Davies - may not be the most familiar name on the circuit but an audience of about 40 assembled in the Recital Room at SHP, drawn by a programme of music that promised to be different from the repertoire usually offered to audiences.

Nicholas introduced the programme by pointing out that the music consisted entirely of pieces written specifically for 2 guitars, itself probably unusual but thereby ensuring the the music we were about to hear all sounded as if it belonged in this format. Nicholas then announced the first piece, Napoleon Coste's Grand Duo, consisting of 4 movements, the largest work for 2 guitars that the composer wrote. The work opened with a Concertino, followed by an Andante, Barcarolle and Finale. The 2nd and 4th movements in particular sounded very Beethoven-esque, perhaps no co-incidence given that the music was composed in the mid 19th century, soon after Beethoven's death. Our performers set the standard for the evening, with the interchange between the two guitars, use of the length of the fingerboard, expression and dynamics all being impressive. One can quite believe that the work pushed the capabilities of the guitar at the time it was written to the limit, as intended by the composer.

The Coste was one of the pieces from the Duo's first CD published in 2006, a disc of 19th century guitar music. Our second piece was from what will be the Duo's second CD, due to be available in the middle of this year, and which features music from Mediterranean countries. One of these is the Greek Dance of Corfou by Dimitri Fampas, very romantic and lyrical, richly dominated by Greek traditional elements, colours and rhythms which clearly expressed the

composer's love for the guitar and his country, as well as his strong and passionate personality.

In a change of programme, we next heard Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco's Sonatina Canonica. The composer was born in Tuscany, but fled to the USA in the late 1930's, where he soon carved out for himself a career in film music as well as composing many pieces for our own instrument. As the name of the piece suggested, the Sonatina explored the canon as a musical form throughout its 3 movements.

During the interval which followed, whilst I was impressed by the duo's performance to date, thoughts were forming that the recital would benefit from something of a contrast to the music of the first half of the event. Such thoughts were banished as soon as the duo opened the 2nd half of the recital with the strident initial bars of Rodrigo's Tonadilla. I hadn't heard this piece played live before, and was particularly impressed by the duo's rendition of the tuneful Minuetto Pomposo with its scalar passages. If anyone wishes to hear this piece again there's a video available <<here>> on You Tube featuring Julian Bream and John Williams, and I thought our artists performance compared very favourably with that of these maestros.

We next had another contrast, as the duo played us Song without Words by Kiriakos Giorginakis, also on their new CD. This was a less overtly Greek piece than the Fampas, the composer's music being subject to a number of wider influences but its peaceful nature certainly lived up to the description with which it was trailed as a spacious piece, conjuring up images of the open Greek landscape. The composer was a student of Dimitri Fampas, and also studied journalism and architecture in addition to teaching and composing, but unfortunately died young at the age of 39.

For their final piece the duo reverted back to the 19th century and their first CD, with two miniatures by Mertz. The composer was a contemporary of Napoleon Coste, but whereas the latter evoked Beethoven's music, the Mertz pieces seemed to follow the pianistic style of the time, particularly Chopin. We heard a Mazurka and Tarantella, the latter building up to a highly effective climax as it evoked the southern Italian dance upon which

it is based (a supposed cure for the bite of the tarantula spider in which the dancer ends up collapsing through exhaustion).

There was never any doubt that the duo would be requested by the highly approving audience to provide an encore, which duly arrived in the form of another piece by Giorganakis, an energetic piece in total contrast to the spaced out Song without Words that we had heard earlier in the evening.

Thus ended an excellent recital, I thought one of the best that the Society has put on in recent times and judging by the audience reaction afterwards I wasn't the only person thinking along those lines. Watch the duo's web site for news of their CD of mediterranean music when it comes out later this year.

Webaddress:

<http://www.aradaguitarduo.co.uk>

The Eden/Stell Guitar Duo - Southernhay United Reformed Church, Exeter, 22nd March 2008 (courtesy of Dr Ivan Andrews)

Although it was Easter Saturday it was a cold evening and the best efforts of the heating system at the Southernhay United Reformed Church (humming quietly to itself throughout the concert) could not warm the church enough for the audience (approximately 70 people in a church that could have seated 200) to take their coats off. This did not deter the Eden/Stell Duo who, despite the obvious threat from cold fingers, put on a great evening of music and pictures.

Mark Eden and Christopher Stell (see <http://www.edenstell.com/>) were new names to me but I was persuaded to attend the concert by the rave review given by the concert's organiser Stephen Gordon (a resident of Exeter) who announced he is putting on a number of such concerts. Steve was not wrong, the playing was exciting and electric - most of the concert, even some difficult works, played from memory. The forte's were bold and strident and the piano's and double piano's (despite competition with the heating system) were clear and precise, and the ensemble well honed.

The concert started with a piece entitled "Concerto (for Oboe my programme said) in D minor BWV 974". I was a little confused about its origins as the

programme accredited it to JS Bach but I thought Mark Eden told us that it was initially written by Allesandro Marcello, re-arranged by Bach and then arranged for two guitars by Mark. Whoever the piece should be accredited to, it was a good solid opener in three movements - allegro, adagio and presto.

This was followed by a performance (again from memory) of five movements (of the 8) of Torroba's "Estampas" written initially for guitar quartet but "de-arranged" (in Mark's words) by Mark. When I was a member of the Berkshire Guitar Quartet (Gary Jordan, Richard Butters, Roger Green, and myself) we had a stab at these pieces and I played them again with the Colibri Guitar Quartet and I can tell you that they are not easy to play with four guitars, so I was intrigued to see what Mark had done to make them playable by a duo. I was amazed at how authentic they sounded and how little, if anything, I could detect that was missing. Mind you I was watching hands, as you do when you are a guitarist, and it did seem to be a fist full for both players.

Leo Brower's "Per Suonare a Due" followed. This was a piece written in the 1970s and in the introductory remarks we were encouraged to "give it a chance as we will soon be back to melody" and the organisers were urged to lock the doors so we could not escape! However, we should not have been worried. Although the music was modern and unusual, it was also interesting, particularly the fourth movement (the longest) which included a musical (and visual face pulling) argument between the two guitarists. At one point whilst the music was being played Chris rose from his chair (the two having moved their chairs quite away apart for this piece) and strode towards Mark playing menacing shot notes on his guitar - all to the audience's amusement of course. The final movement of this piece included all sorts of weird and interesting sounds created by the guitars and the players!

The first half ended with the old potboiler "Danza Espanola (La Vida Breve)" by Manuel de Falla (arranged by Pujol) played at a hairy rate of knots.

The second half of the programme consisted mainly of five pieces, which depicted places in Britain and pictures were projected onto a screen to

accompany the music. I learned later that this was a new audio/visual project and that the Duo had not performed it much, which made it all the more amazing that the pictures faded in and out at the right time and final fade outs occurred with the final notes of each piece, a great piece of timing.

The pieces were "Music For an Island" by Michael Ball with pictures of Lindisfarne, "Finzi's Rest" by Herbert Howells (arranged by M Lewin) with pictures of May Hill (where Finzi's ashes were scattered) and Gloucester Cathedral, "Fantasy on an Old English Melody" (again a quartet "de-arranged" by Mark) to the pictures of Nottingham and Sherwood Forest, Lennon and McCartney's "Penny Lane" (arranged by Leo Brower) with pictures of - well you can guess, and finally "Farewell to Stromness" a popular piece by Peter Maxwell Davis (arranged by Mark) with pictures of the Orkney Islands. I for one thought this juxtaposition of pictures and music worked very well and was a very enjoyable experience.

The concert ended with another modern piece with an unusual guitar tuning, by Gary Ryan called "Generator" which, we were told, depicts a piece of machinery starting up getting going and then grinding to a stop again. This was an interesting piece to finish on. We did not get an encore but I for one was completely satisfied with what I had heard and didn't really need one - although I would have liked to have heard more from these two guitar virtuosos of course.

If you get a chance to hear the Eden/Stell Guitar Duo live then do so as you will not regret it. I had a great evening, despite the cold.

Webaddress:

<http://www.edenstell.com/>


