Volume 19, No. 1, September / November 2011

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BOSTON CLASSICAL GUITAR SOCIETY
katona twins guitar duo
Sunday OCTOBER 9 3pm
First Church of Christ, 136 Main Street, Sandwich, MA

hopkinson smith lute
Friday OCTOBER 14 7:45pm
First Lutheran Church of Boston, 299 Berkeley Street

xuefeiyang guitar
Thursday JANUARY 26 7:15pm
First Lutheran Church of Boston

FRIDAY MARCH 9 7:45pm
First Lutheran Church of Boston

ARTIST SERIES & FESTIVAL 21
featuring david leisner
new music all day
Saturday APRIL 21
Old South Church
645 Boylston Street, Boston
evening concert
First Lutheran Church of Boston

bostonguitar.org
nefa
D'Addario

BOSTON CLASSICAL GUITAR SOCIETY
newsletter
Letter to Members

Dear Members,

Fall is truly a wonderful time to be in New England. I hope you are enjoying the outdoors as well as the uptick in area cultural and artistic events. If you were affected by the recent inclement weather and power outages, best wishes for a speedy return to normal!

The BCGS began a new season with exciting performances by the Katona Twins in October. Zoltán and Péter displayed a considerable musical range combined with seemingly effortless technical virtuosity. I was especially intrigued by their frequent use of percussive techniques in Scarlatti’s *Metamorphosis* and the Beatles’ *Come Together*. This is certainly an under-appreciated capability of the guitar and should be explored more by current players and composers. The extroverted nature of the Katonas’ performances (enhanced by a stand-up playing style) was also a joy to behold. They were not merely playing in front of, but fully for the audience.

The Katonas’ unflinching juxtaposition of the Beatles and Queen with Granados and Boccherini leads to a wider question: to what extent can classical guitarists and guitar societies embrace a wider range of repertoire that incorporates pop? There are certainly strong cases to be made for either the “artistic high ground” of a stricter classical concert or the “accessibility” and “fun” of a crossover performance. We can see this contrast quite visibly at Symphony Hall, where the Boston Symphony and Pops orchestras juggle busy schedules every season. After three hundred years of the common practice period and a tumultuous twentieth century, western art music is indeed at a crossroads with uncertain outcomes, propelled forward by the unprecedented global interconnectivity of the digital age.

In his fantastic book, *The Rest is Noise*, Alex Ross writes, “At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the impulse to pit classical music against pop culture no longer makes intellectual or emotional sense.” Current generations of classical composers, musicians, and listeners have been affected by popular music and that influence can manifest itself in a multitude of ways, from compositional techniques and repertoire choices to consumer habits. The guitar has become integral to musical genres around the world, such as flamenco, blues, recent Turkish and Indian music, and pop/rock. Therefore, we are supporters of an instrument that can re-imagine past masterworks, probe connections with popular/folk styles, and shape our musical future.

I feel that it is the duty of societies such as the BCGS to offer both breadth and depth in their programming, rediscovering extraordinary music from the past while creating a way forward. On January 26, Hopkinson Smith will bring light to a winter evening with works from the golden age of the Renaissance lute. In March, Xuefei Yang will show us how the Spanish guitar can inspire passion in far away China. Later next spring, we will come together as a community at Festival 21 and led by David Leisner, take brave steps towards a more defined future for the guitar.

Warm regards,

Dan Acsadi
Director, BCGS
Hopkinson Smith: Master of Lute and Early Plucked Instruments

BCGS Artist Series
Thursday, January 26, 2012

By Dan Acsadi

Playing early music often requires the performer to be a kind of musical archeologist, needing to unearth and reassemble whatever remaining clues one finds into a convincing musical narrative. What makes early music master Hopkinson Smith such a powerful artist is his ability to imbue the necessary research and reconstruction with a soulful musical spirit that can truly transcend eras and instruments.

My introduction to Hopkinson came via his recording of Luys Milan’s El Maestro, the first printed book for the vihuela. Resembling a small guitar but played like a lute, the Spanish vihuela enjoyed a brief popularity that aligned with the country’s 16th-century golden age. Milan’s Pavanas from this collection are standard fare for those learning guitar; they have become part of our “greatest hits.” I’m especially drawn to Milan’s Fantasias for their flexible tempi and imaginative, improvisatory feel. While preparing for a recital, I listened to Hopkinson’s recording of Milan’s Fantasia 18, a piece consisting of grand and airy chord progressions, their musical spaciousness explored and completed by thrilling scale runs. The track lasted three minutes and I was an instant fan.

Hopkinson’s interpretation creates a cohesive feel, with musical ideas that develop organically. He authoritatively pushes forward the melody, and the listener eagerly anticipates the arrival of each new note. The scales are fluid, accelerating throughout into crystal clear, variedly articulated chords. All in all, the track is an exemplary balance of taste, sophistication, and passionate expression.

Bradley Bamberger succinctly summarizes Hopkinson’s recordings in a Star Ledger review:

“Playing the lute today requires the soul of a poet and the curiosity of a scientist…Cultured and confident in his way, but shyly soft-spoken, the 58-year-old Smith seems every inch the poet-scientist. The New York-born, Harvard-trained sage of many archaic plucked instruments now resides in Switzerland, where he teaches at Basel’s Schola Cantorum, a hallowed academy for early music. Smith’s more than 20 solo recordings—of Milan, Gallot, Weiss, Bach -- are like an illuminated manuscript in sound, articulating a whole world of ancient scores, abstruse techniques and deep, timeless emotions.

Along with his teaching activities, Hopkinson is a prolific concert performer. In a WOSU Columbus interview, he says performance “is the moment of truth in a way for the musician, when you’re there with the instrument and can create something of the magic that these earlier repertoires intrinsically have.” It will be a joy to welcome him back to Boston Thursday, January 26, for a Renaissance lute concert that will include works from Francesco Da Milano, Giovanni Girolamo Kapsperger, Dowland, and Holborne.

photo P. Franke/Bariloche

BCGS Crossword

Across
1. Regal Blues
3. Player’s Points
4. "Beautiful" pure silver basses
7. Midwinter lutenist's moniker
8. Chinese guitar phenom
9. Aussie orchestra organizer

Down
2. Hub summer guitar institute
5. F21 headliner
6. Cape constructor
7. Saturday Sounds location

Answers on the next page
Calendar

Upcoming BCGS Sponsored Events

Saturday, November 26, 3:00pm
Saturday Sounds Special Series - Hingham Public Library
Michael Sheridan, solo guitar

Saturday, December 3, 1:30pm
BCGS Performance Party

Saturday, December 17, 3:00pm
Saturday Sounds Special Series - Hingham Public Library
Gerry Johnston, solo jazz guitar

Thursday, January 26, 2012, 7:15pm
BCGS Artist Series: Hopkinson Smith

Other Events

Tuesday, November 29, 12:00pm
Aaron Larget-Caplan, King’s Chapel

Saturday, December 10, 8pm
Aaron Larget-Caplan, New Lullaby Project Premiers
New School of Music, Cambridge

Sunday, December 11, 3:00pm
The Roscher Guitar: More Music from the North European Parlor
Olav Chris Henriksen plays the 1810 Roscher guitar

Sunday December 11, 6:00pm
Guitar & Friends Holiday Concert with Boston Latin American Chamber Orchestra, Zaira Meneses, Adam Eccleston, Marta Domínguez, Leticia Prieto Alvarez, and Dan Acsadi. New Art Center, Newton, MA. Kids’ activities start at 5pm.

Wednesday, December 14, 7:00pm
Aaron Larget-Caplan at the Boston Apple Store
Visit the BCGS website at www.bostonguitar.org for information about ticketing, directions and more.

Classifieds

Classifieds are $10 per issue of the BCGS newsletter for a 32-word ad, and $0.25 for each additional word. The fee includes posting on this webpage for three months. Send inquiries to adbcgs[at]gmail.com; send checks to BCGS, P.O. Box 470665, Brookline, MA 02447, or PayPal the money to bcgsemail[at]gmail.com.

Guitars For Sale


1984 R.E. Brune Concert Model 7-String, original owner. Cedar top, Indian Rosewood sides/back, catalyzed urethane finish. All original with Rodgers machines, 664mm scale length. Good condition, great sound and attractive looking instrument. $6,200. seths43[at]gmail.com, 207-847-3643

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Miscellaneous

MONTHLY PERFORMANCE CLASSES with guitarist Judy Handler in Vernon, CT. Guitarists of all levels welcome. Supportive atmosphere. Receive feedback from peers and experienced teacher and performer. (860) 871-1815 guitar duo@comcast.net

Crossword Answers:
Across
1. Augustine
3. D’Addario
4. LaBella
7. Hopkinson
8. Yang
9. Borg

Down
2. GuitarFest
5. Leisner
6. Connor
7. Hingham

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**New Villa-Lobos album by former BCGS Artistic Director**

*By Will Riley*

Former BCGS Artistic Director Nicholas Ciraldo has released a new recording of the complete Preludes and Etudes of Heitor Villa-Lobos, entitled “Guitar Music of Villa-Lobos Including the 1928 Manuscript”. Many guitarists have recorded the Preludes and Etudes, but few have used this early manuscript as a source for the Etudes, and Ciraldo gives a powerful interpretation and a creative new take on these important works in the guitar repertoire. An additional societal point of interest is that the album received post-production engineering from the BCGS’s own Frank Wallace. The following is an interview with the artist about the recording.

**BCGS:** Nick, how has learning, performing, and recording the complete Preludes and Etudes of Villa-Lobos changed you as a musician and guitarist?  
**NC:** Learning the music showed me, among many other things, a body of music that seems influenced by various musical styles and composers not normally associated with the guitar (Impressionism/Debussy, Primitivism/Stravinsky, Popular Brazilian Music/nearous composers, etc) as well as Villa-Lobos’s affinity for the guitar and its idiomatic qualities. Performing them, especially the etudes, has always been a challenge. The etudes in particular are extremely demanding, both psychologically and physically. Also challenging was the recording project, though listening to it now gives me a great sense of accomplishment.

**BCGS:** How did you develop an interest in this project and what was your introduction to the “1928 Manuscript”?  
**NC:** I actually just happened to be playing a lot of repertoire all at once a little while ago. I found an opportunity to record everything in the summer of 2010. The preludes and etudes were part of this collection, and so I thought it sensible to put them together on one CD. I learned of the 1928 Manuscript at a colleague’s party in Austin, Texas -- someone there just happened to have a copy. Finding it extremely intriguing, I wrote to the Villa-Lobos Museum to get a copy of my own.

**BCGS:** You play Etude #1 without the familiar repeat of most measures, and you’ve chosen very quick tempi in the faster etudes. Are there any tempo indications that are different in the 1928 Manuscript, and what about the repeats? Is this just interpretation?  
**NC:** I tried my very best to honor all of the 1928 Manuscript’s markings, including those for tempos and repeats. Not only are there numerous differences in tempo markings between the two versions, there are markings in the 1928 Manuscript that do not even exist in the published versions. Since my interpretation is, first and foremost, based upon my attempt to represent the 1928 Manuscript the best I can, the faster tempos and lack of repeats are borne from that endeavor.

**BCGS:** What are some of the other unique features of this manuscript that differ from the currently published one?  
**NC:** There truly is a vast amount of differences, but the more striking are the expressive markings (especially accents, dynamics, and tempos), the portions of music not found in the published versions, and the way in which all the notations seem to make sense, unlike the published versions.

**BCGS:** Making a recording like this obviously requires an incredible amount of energy. How did you go about such an intensive project while balancing full-time teaching, family life, and a performing career?  
**NC:** Recording in the summer made it easier for me, since I had fewer students and concerts, and I thank my wife, Rachel, for helping on the "home front" during that period. All of that provided me the time to practice and focus.

**BCGS:** How did your engineers contribute to the process?  
**NC:** I had a nice young man assist in the technical set-up and break-down every night at the church in which I recorded. Frank Wallace edited the entire CD, and he provided immense help with polishing the overall product. I was very fortunate to work with him.

**BCGS:** You dedicate this recording to Robert Ignatius Ciraldo (1918-2010) – your grandfather? What impact did he have in your musical development?  
**NC:** Yes, my father's father. He was very musical and an early influence on my sense of passion for music. He passed away in the summer that I recorded this CD. I have fond memories of us sitting together and listening to music.

**BCGS:** Thank you, Nick.  
**NC:** It is my honor!

More information about Nicholas Ciraldo can be found at [www.ciraldomusic.com](http://www.ciraldomusic.com). The album can be purchased there or through CD Baby.