



BCGS



newsletter

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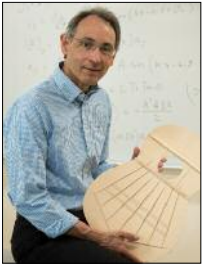
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Letter to Members



Dear BCGS members, during these times we have lots of opportunities to reflect, and our past comes back to us. Our dreams change. As we limit our ramblings on this earth, and our contacts with its inhabitants we are left with self and those few so close to us whose fate we commit to make our own. This state of being is hard to understand. To be so close, yet so far away. We seek to connect with

those in our lives, present and past, who hold special places in our hearts. The restrictions of our reality force us to look at the continuum of our life, and assess, question, project. The uncertainty of everything weighs on our minds making the decisions of daily life less certain. It is the great leveling which has forced us all to experience that which some bear in normal times – the prisoner, the critically ill, the homeless, the lonely in old age. We must also meet the basic needs of life, we must eat, shelter, stay safe. Where does this leave us on Maslow's hierarchy. Whereas many of us have had the good fortune to exist mainly in levels four or five, now we find ourselves preoccupied in all five levels at various times of the day.

Our BCGS 2019/20 season had been racing along with stellar artists concerts, sensational parties, supreme community concerts, and spectacular festivals. In February we were on our final sprint crossing our New England Guitar Ensemble Festival and headed toward our grand finale closing with David Russell, but then, everything stopped. And, we are having to re-order our lives.

Like many, I find myself coping via the magic of our modern communications technology. Indeed, it is a blessing that we have infinite information at our fingertips, and the immediate ability to connect via image and voice with our loved ones. Last year our society webmaster, Michael Bester, introduced us to ZOOM for better board communication. Now this is a major pillar of my daily life. On ZOOM I teach my physics students, Leslie and I share with our son in San Francisco and daughter in Denver, we reconnect with family members, and we have ZOOM cocktail parties with our friends. I started my career, long ago, working for Bell

Telephone Laboratories in the field of digital communications. I remember in the 1980's reading John Naisbitt's popular book, "Megatrends" in which he stated that—the world's economies would center primarily on information. In the mid 80's I had a difficult time imagining that. What is this information "stuff"; you can't eat it, you can't wear it, you can't live in it, you can't drive it ... well, here we are. The virtual world is sustaining us, and bringing us our food via Instacart, our goods via Amazon, our entertainment via Netflix, and our loved ones via ZOOM, Facebook, and Instagram.

I feel the highest form of information is art – poetry, music, objects of art, and (particularly dear) guitars. In the words of Rainer Maria Rilke: *"...most experiences are unsayable, they happen in a space that no word has ever entered, and more unsayable than all other things are works of art, those mysterious existences, whose life endures beside our own small, transitory life."*

We are fortunate to have the art of the guitar. In our BCGS family we have created many wonderful relationships among our members. We look forward to being a part of what sustains your humanity during these isolated times, and at a future time when we will all celebrate by shedding this virtual cocoon and being together again. For now, we hope you enjoy the content in this newsletter and our photo gallery from recent events. Keep an eye out for upcoming virtual events, such as ZOOM performance parties, and special web page and Facebook content. We thank all of you for your continued support.

Spring is here, and soon the outdoors will be full of green, colorful flowers, sweet smells, warm breezes, and sunshine. Of this we can be thankful. My friends, I hope this note finds you and your loved ones well, and that your anxieties are bearable.

God bless and take care.

J. Oscar Azaret
Executive Director, BCGS



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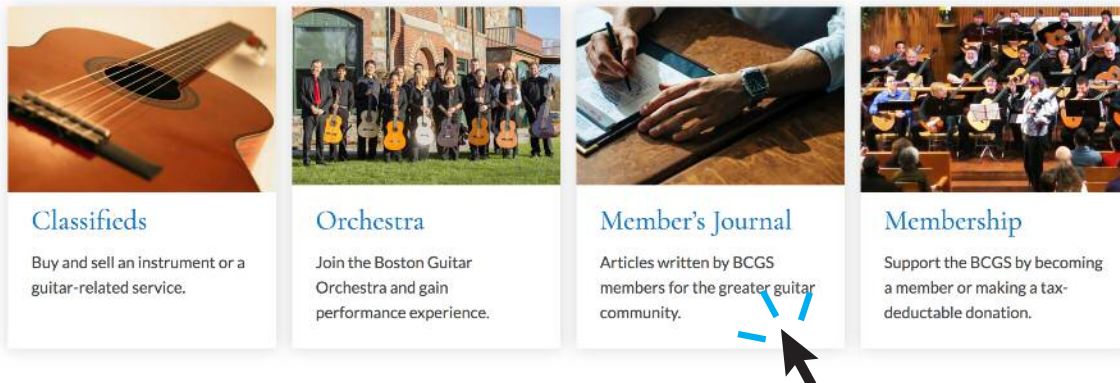
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<https://bostonguitar.org/journal/>



BCGS Member's Journal

Dear Members, we are happy to introduce a new venue for you and resource for the global guitar community at large. On Friday April 10, 2020 we unveiled our own BCGS Member's Journal on our website. Check out the premier, fun educational articles from our long-standing member Steve Rapson.

There is such a wealth of knowledge and wisdom in our Society. We look forward to many of you taking this opportunity to share your passion with the World. I would love to know a bit about your perspective, and I know that many others feel the same.

Goal

To provide members with a forum to share their love of the guitar and everything about it

What

A page on our website where we will place articles written by members, and which can be viewed by anyone accessing our website. Some of these articles may be good candidates to include in our annual paper newsletter

Content

Any tasteful topic related to guitar (with focus on the classical guitar) — music, composers, pedagogy, technique, performance, instruments, strings, lutherie, artists, concerts, historical topics, composition, ensemble playing, etc, etc. The sky is the limit.

Criteria

The requirements will be that it focus on aspects of the guitar, be of reasonably good quality, and have no negative critical or contentious content. The goal is to allow members to share their understanding and perspective with the goal of providing benefits to others and building community. This is not intended to be a “blog”, rather a “low key” journal to enhance the value of the society to the members and the broader guitar community.

Process

Email Mark Small mark.small@bostonguitar.org with your proposal. He will review the article to determine if it meets the requirements and request any needed edits. The goal here is not to strive for perfect journalistic excellence, but simply a reasonable level of quality, and no negative/contentious content. Once an article has been approved, it will go to our webmaster – Michael Bester for publishing.

The Future

Who knows where this might lead. Perhaps particularly good articles could be presented by the author at one of our festivals, or perhaps a special society gathering to focus on discussion and presentations. Perhaps one day the BCGS will sponsor “The New England Journal of the Guitar” – NEJG. Sky's the limit.



2/11/2020

Boundless Guitar - The Boston Musical Intelligencer

The Boston Musical Intelligencer

NEWS & FEATURES
REVIEWS
UPCOMING EVENTS
ABOUT THE JOURNAL

FEBRUARY 10, 2020

IN: REVIEWS

Boundless Guitar

by MARK SMALL



The power of Matt Palmer's guitar swept through the chapel of First Lutheran Church of Boston like a mighty rushing wind during his February 8th appearance for the Boston Classical Guitar Society artist series. In a program that included only six selections, Palmer—a young virtuoso of the highest order—focused his attention primarily on offerings by living composers. Two exceptions were J.S. Bach's famous *Chaconne* from violin partita BWV 1004 and *Collecti íntim* by Vicente Asencio

(1903–1979).

Dispensing with classical recital formality, Palmer warmly welcomed his audience and shared insights about the first piece before sounding a note. The opener, *Fantasy on "Crimson Moon"* by Sergei Rudnev, elaborates on strains of Russian folk songs. The composer's darkly programmatic score portrays an aggrieved wife taking her unfaithful husband for a crepuscular excursion in a rowboat amid increasingly turbulent waters and dispatching him. Palmer executed the work's vigorous scalar bursts with ease and handled its lyrical sections with contrasting grace.

<https://www.classical-scene.com/2020/02/10/boundless-guitar/>

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Boundless Guitar - The Boston Musical Intelligencer

Leo Brouwer's three-movement suite *El Decameron Negro* from 1981 draws its inspiration from African folk tales. The music mingles spiky chromatic lines with sweet melodies often underpinned by rippling arpeggios. Palmer masterfully met each of Brouwer's technical challenges, telling the stories of love and war with befitting passion.

The concert's first half ended the *Chaconne*, a benchmark for guitarists since Andrés Segovia premiered his transcription of it in a 1935 Paris concert. Palmer shared that this was his first time performing it publicly. Bach's series of variations includes plenty of blazing scales and arpeggios. At times, it seemed Palmer took them at an extraordinarily fast clip just because he could. But his rendition was hardly empty bravado. He also gently carried his listeners through the emotional essence of this musical monument. Palmer confided during a post-concert conversation that he spontaneously added his own improvised variation at the point of modulation from minor to major.

For his second half, Palmer began with *Catharsis*, an intense, four-movement work by Canadian metal-influenced cellist and composer Raphael Weinroth-Browne. Palmer accurately described the music as a mashup of flamenco, cinematic, and progressive metal elements. Palmer, who played metal until diving deep into classical guitar at age 20, seemed completely at home with the unbridled thrashing energy of both flamenco and metal in the movements "Ire" and "Confusion." "Reverie" leaned toward the cinematic with its spacious textures, introspective melody, and wandering and occasionally pungent harmonies. "Absolution" closed the suite with slashing strummed passages, brooding arpeggiations, and power chords in the coda.

The five movements of Asencio's *Collecti íntim* are firmly grounded in the style and harmonic language of mid-20th-century Spanish guitar music. The Catalan titles describe moods ranging from serenity to joy to calm, to "frisança" (for which word I find no translation). Asencio incorporated idiomatic devices from tremolo to flailing rasgueados to tender melodies punctuated by pinging harmonics floating over lush harmonic progressions. Throughout, Palmer evidenced confident mastery over each mood and guitarism.

He characterized the closer, Stepan Rak's one-movement *Sonata Mongoliana*, as a showcase for the extended techniques Rak has developed and borrowed for his compositions. Rak hinted at Mongolian influences with passages in perfect fourths and fifths and evocative multi-string tremolos played with glissandos up and down the guitar neck pausing once the right hand eventually reached the guitar bridge. The last minute featured all manner of raucous strumming and culminated with a final chord jab.



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Boundless Guitar - The Boston Musical Intelligencer

Following a standing ovation, Palmer returned for an encore that made for a complete change of pace. After explaining that songwriter Tom Waits has long been among his favorites, Palmer played his own highly satisfying and introverted arrangement of Waits's "I'm Still Here." Palmer's Boston appearance emphasized his stature among the impressive generation of rising young guitarists whose seemingly boundless facility equips them to play virtually anything and whose minds appear open to a limitless spectrum of music.

BCGS artistic director Charles Ewing and artistic advisor Jérôme Mouffe, among others, are to be commended for bringing Palmer and other top guitarists to Boston audiences. The society's final concert of the season will feature celebrated Scottish-born virtuoso David Russell on April 25th. Visit bostonguitar.org for ticket information.

Mark Small is a music journalist, classical guitarist, and composer living in the Boston area. He served as the editor of *Berklee today* magazine for 26 years and is a regular contributor to various music publications.

Passion for the Guitar

by Mark Small

For years I've been touched by the beauty of the chorale "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden," which appears in three different harmonizations in Bach's towering sacred masterpiece, *St. Matthew Passion*. I recently decided to transcribe these chorales for solo guitar to learn more about Bach's thinking and to gain access to this transcendent music. I hope you will give this a read even though music in four parts is always a challenge for solo guitar. Condensing a polyphonic texture into one staff is not a simple task, but I've tried to make this transcription as idiomatic as possible without losing the music's essence. That meant occasionally dropping a voice at places where including it made the fingering just too hard. Don't give up on the whole piece when you encounter tough passages in the first harmonization. This one is actually the hardest of the three with some



quirky voicings (see beat one, bar 2), and a cadence in bar 15 that's a handful. If you find it too much of a struggle, skip directly to bar 33. This last harmonization falls quite readily under the hands and is really lovely. The second setting (bars 17-32) is a bit more complex than the third, but quite manageable. Bach's chromaticism in bars 25-32 is sublime. Perhaps playing the easier parts first will draw you in and you will want to investigate the treasures hidden in the first. Due to the current circumstances, there will be no live performances of this amazing oratorio during Easter week. So many of us have different beliefs or maybe don't subscribe to any faith tradition, but we feel something from Bach's music in its original form or in transcriptions. As guitarists currently sequestered in our homes this season, I hope playing this little offering may give you a glimmer of the deep spirituality that undergirds all of Bach's music.

—Mark Small

(Sheet music appears on the following pages)



O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden

Three chorale settings from St. Matthew's Passion

H.L. Hassler/J.S. Bach
transcribed by Mark Small

$\text{♩} = 72$

4

8

8

12

16

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2
20

24
8

1/2 C V

C VIII

28
8

C III

32
8

♩ = 80

36
8

40
8

1/2 C II

44
8

C III



Board Member Letters



There are so many things to hate about Covid-19; Sickness, death, fear, isolation, financial challenges/problems/disasters, anger, uncertainty etc. I hope I've learned from these unwelcome challenges.

I've never been so aware of the heroism of ordinary people. From the doctors, nurses, technicians, and EMTs who care for the sick to the grocery clerks we are surrounded by people who risk their health to provide us with essentials. Their resilience and strength are inspiring. I have a new respect for my fellow humans.

Covid-19 has been a brutal reminder of the omnipresent, but often ignored, uncertainty of every aspect of life. We are seduced to live as if things as we know will continue and our lives will go on. These weeks are my first glimpse of the fear and uncertainty people must experience with the onset of a major war. Who will live and who will die? What will happen to me? to mine? What will the world be like tomorrow? When will this be over? Will it ever be over? How can we live with such uncertainty staring us starkly in the face? We are forced to live the words of Winston Churchill: "When you are going through hell, just keep going."

I fear for my health and life and for that of my loved ones, especially my wife, who has more risk factors, and my daughter, her wife and 82-year-old mother-in-law who live in Manhattan. I worry about how to care for my grandson in DC should his parents get sick or die. I can be overwhelmed to think of the suffering that has already and will continue to come from Covid-19. However, I am lucky in so many ways. My family and I are well. I know personally of no one who is seriously ill. I won't face economic devastation although I will pay a financial price, perhaps significant, for this epidemic. I have my family, my friends, my music and my guitar to sooth my soul and fill my time. I spend more time with my beloved wife. I enjoy the Zoom reading times we do with my young grandson. I was cheered by the timely arrival of my lovely new Azaret short-scale guitar. (Alas, I still don't play like Angel Romero. What a surprise!) I am not lonely although I do experience cabin fever. I continue my wonderful guitar lessons with Berit Strong via Zoom. I eat better because we have more time to plan and cook. These are the things that are going well. I am reminded of the Yiddish proverb "Even with bad luck you need some good luck." I guess I've enjoyed some of that.

Be well, be patient, and revel in your affection for the classical guitar.

Rocco Bombardieri

Treasurer, Boston Classical Guitar Society



I walk a lot in the early morning. We have a beautiful, state of the art soccer field here in Weymouth about a quarter of a mile from my home and three times around the perimeter with my newly adopted pup Wendy equals a mile. Earlier is better because there aren't many walkers these days. When we do cross paths we steer clear and most times just wave or say hello but we wonder if either of us is a carrier. The term "hello, how are you?" is not so casual anymore.

Needless to say it's an uncertain time for everyone and with all the cancellations and strong recommendations to stay home we're forced to be more creative with our indoor time. I work in publishing so working at home is an option for me. Once a week I teleconference with my fellow employees to keep projects moving ahead—and I like it—I'm tired of looking terrible on Zoom! So being at home is the right thing to do but the usual chores can take you just so far. Fortunately we all share another outlet and that's playing music on the guitar. I use this time to practice and follow artists on YouTube. If a melody captures my interest the next logical step is a web-search for the sheet music.

The following is a brief update on the local cancellation process of the Hingham Library Series and the April performance for the Westford PCA Guitar Series.

The Hingham Sunday Sounds series is of course cancelled but not before we considered another more spacious venue back when social distancing (every other seat empty) looked like a safe alternative. But as the seriousness of the COVID-19 virus took hold town governments of Hingham and Weymouth took charge. All non-essential services were closed. With this news and coordination with the library directors we cancelled the Sunday Sounds concerts effective March through June—the end of the series. We also cancelled the final guitar performance this month for the Westford PCA Series featuring The Great Necks Trio.

This was a great disappointment for everyone involved because these popular, well-attended performances provide an important opportunity for BCGS members and students to make music and interact with appreciative audiences. We are anxious to return and will keep you informed. September is the tentative start date for the 2020-21 series at both venues.

Final note: The Board of Directors is working hard to keep members up to date on society matters and to provide new and interesting connections to the music and each other. Please frequent the bostonguitar.org website, stay safe and I'll close with this quote which greets visitors at the Musical Instrument Museum in Phoenix, AZ.

"Music is the language of the soul"

George Ward, Newsletter and Library Series Curator



BCGS Artist Series Concert Featuring Matt Palmer



Matt Palmer in Concert



Charles Ewing with Matt Palmer



BGO Players Aashna Jain, Jim Davison, Scott Hacker



Ewan Armstrong, Jerome Mouffe, Oscar Azaret



Jan Roll-Mederos, Michael Bester



Larry & Karen Spencer



Farook Siddique



New England Guitar Ensembles Festival (NEGEF) and Performance Party



Irina Kulikova in Concert



Jeffrey Aach



Ewan Armstrong



George Ward, Bill Glenn



Concert Time: Robert Bekkers and the NEGEF Guitar Orchestra



Practice Session, Robert Bekkers at the Helm



Berklee Faculty
Abigail Aronson & Berta Rojas



Jimmy Lanzillota



Dan Acsadi Conducts



January Performance Party Hosted by Michael Bester



Amanda Roeder, Michael Bester



Anna Borges & Bill Ward



Celeste McClain, Terence Hegarty



Celeste McClain, Larry Spencer



Doug Danforth



Frank Papineau & Michael Bester



Michael Bester & Chris Ruth



Jeff Wyman, Jeffrey Aach, Leslie Azaret



Merle Bombardieri & Anna Borges



Robert Bekkers



Anna Borges & Oscar Azaret



Mike Tomases, John McClain