

# Guitarist

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## Sundin Hall Concerts



**Denis Azabagic**  
**Saturday, March 4**  
**8 pm**

**Xuefei Yang**  
**Saturday, April 8**  
**8 pm**



**Gilbert Biberian**  
**Saturday, April 29**  
**8 pm**

### Also In This Issue

Learn about Local Artists Series concerts: Jeffrey Van on Sunday, March 19; Dawn Sonntag and Annett Richter duo, and Todd Tipton, on Sunday, April 2

# Society News / Editor's Notes

## Upcoming Sundin Hall Concerts (all start at 8 pm)

Saturday, March 4th, Denis Azabagic

Saturday, April 8th, Xuefei Yang

Saturday, April 29th, Gilbert Biberian

Saturday, May 27th, our season ends with the annual Classical Guitarathon

Concert and ticket information: visit <[www.mnguitar.org](http://www.mnguitar.org)> or call 612-677-1151.

## Upcoming Local Artists Concerts

Sunday, March 19th, 2 pm, Jeffrey Van at Ferguson Hall (University of Minnesota, west bank)

Sunday, April 2nd, 4 pm, the duo of Dawn Sonntag and Annett Richter, as well as Todd Tipton, at the University of St. Thomas's Brady Hall (St. Paul campus).

## Contributors

Thanks to Joe Haus for the interview article with Jeffrey Van, to Kuan Teoh for reviewing the Xuefei Yang CD, and to Daniel Sturm for putting us in touch with Gilbert Biberian. Thanks also to Kevin Carlson and Chris Olson, whose pieces will appear in our next issue. Don't miss it!

## Minnesota Guitar Society Web Site

Information about guitar-related events can be found at the Minnesota Guitar Society Web site calendar. Visit <[www.mnguitar.org](http://www.mnguitar.org)>. At the home page, click on "Calendar." In addition to Society concerts, included are events featuring Minnesota Guitar Society members and other guitarists of note. To get yours listed, email Al Norton at <[apnorton@msn.com](mailto:apnorton@msn.com)>.

## OpenStage

OpenStage, a monthly event sponsored by our Society, gives players of all styles and abilities (and instruments) a chance to perform for others in a friendly atmosphere. All Minnesota Guitar Society members, families, and friends are welcome. There is no charge to attend. For more info, visit the Minnesota Guitar Society Web site. Join us at the following:

Saturday, March 18th, 3 pm, at Betsy's Back Porch coffeehouse, at the corner of Diamond Lake Rd. and Nicollet Ave. in Richfield

Sunday, April 23rd, 3 pm, at the University of St. Thomas Brady Education Center (St. Paul campus, west of Cretin Ave. and north of Goodrich Ave.)

## Contributions Welcome

Send us your news—gigs, concerts, CDs, etc. We also need CD reviews and educational articles. Contact the editor for more information. Information must be received by the 15th of any odd-numbered month to appear in the next issue (e.g., May/June information needs to reach us by March 15th).

## Guitar Donation Project

Is there a lonely guitar sitting in your closet? Does it never get played? Don't know what to do with it? Well, we have the solution for you! Donate that guitar to the Minnesota Guitar Society. The Society is starting a guitar donation program. We will collect playable but unneeded guitars for the purpose of giving them to those who want a guitar but need a little extra help. If you have a guitar you would like to donate, please bring it to one of our concerts at Sundin Hall. All donations are tax deductible. More information in our next issue.

## Inquiries, Comments, Commendations, and Complaints

Contact editor Paul Hintz by email at <[phintz@divcs.org](mailto:phintz@divcs.org)> or by phone at 651-699-6827.

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## Minnesota Guitar Society Mission Statement

*To promote the guitar, in all its stylistic and cultural diversity, through our newsletter and through our sponsorship of public forums, concerts, and workshops.*

*To commission new music and to aid in its promotion, publication, and recording.*

*To serve as an educational and social link between amateur and professional guitarists and the community.*

*To promote and help create opportunities for Minnesota guitarists and players of related instruments.*

# Concert Spotlight: Denis Azabagic

**B**orn in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in November 1972, Denis Azabagic is regarded as one of the best guitarists of his generation. He holds more than 20 awards from international competitions. His eight first prize awards include the Guitar Foundation of America in 1998. At the age of 20, he became the youngest winner of one of the most prestigious international guitar competitions, "Jacinto e Inocencio Guerrero," in Madrid, Spain. After hearing Azabagic, distinguished Spanish composer Anton Garcia Abril said, "I am sure that with time he is going to be one of the greatest guitarists in the world."

In 1993, Azabagic formed a duo with his wife, Eugenia Moliner Ferrer, a flutist, and since then they have played concerts and festivals throughout Europe and the U.S. Today known as the Cavatina Duo, they have released two CDs featuring a wide variety of repertoire ranging from Piazzolla to Bach.

As a soloist, Azabagic has played with various orchestras, and given recitals throughout the world. He has appeared in the U.S. with the Allentown Symphony, Charlotte Symphony, and Savannah Symphony. In Europe he has performed with Orchestre Royal de chambre de Mons and Symphony Orchestra of Madrid, among others. He has appeared as a guest performer at such famous venues such as Masters of the Guitar at the Royal Concertgebouw in the Netherlands, Radio France in Paris, the Aix en Provence Festival in France, El Palau de la Musica in Valencia, Spain, and in the U.S. at Savannah on Stage, the Omni Foundation, and elsewhere.

Azabagic has recorded four solo CDs for international labels such as Opera Tres, Printemps de la guitarre, and Naxos. In addition, he has published two books and released a documentary performance video (all for Mel Bay Publications). Learn more about these in the interview below. Selections he has recorded will be featured in his concert on March 4th.

Besides his busy performing, recording, and writing career, Azabagic is active as a teacher. In 2002 he was appointed to the faculty of the Chicago College for Performing Arts (Roosevelt University) in downtown Chicago, where he continues to teach.

We were fortunate that Azabagic was willing to take time from his busy schedule to agree to our request for an email interview. Here are his gracious replies to our questions:

*Question:* You've had great experience, and success, in guitar competitions. So it's no surprise that one of the books you've authored for Mel Bay Publications is called *On Competitions*. What's the book's specific purpose?

*Azabagic:* Well, I have been asked many, many times at masterclasses, what is the best advice I could give someone preparing for a competition. So, instead of repeating every time the same thing, I wrote it down and Mel Bay published it. It is basically my experience on how to prepare for any performance situation and how to deal with the stress associated with it.

*Question:* The other book you've done for Mel Bay is a transcription for solo guitar of a Bach flute Partita. Are you working on other transcriptions for publication?

*Azabagic:* No, not on transcriptions, but Mel Bay will release my performance video on DVD and also another instructional DVD should come out soon. It will be an analysis of two pieces, Sor's Variations on Mozart's theme op. 9; and Barrios's *La Catedral*. It will include technical and musical analysis of these two great pieces of the repertoire. I have plans to do more such DVDs.

*Question:* In addition to the recording you made for Naxos after winning the 1998 GFA prize, you've made three solo CDs and two Cavatina Duo CDs. Which one is closest to your heart?

*Azabagic:* It is difficult to answer that. They all have something special that is associated with them, so they are all close to me.

*Question:* Do you have plans for a new recording in the coming year?

*Azabagic:* Yes, with my duo, we are starting to record in May for the Chicago record label Cedille. It will be an album of complete flute/guitar works by David Leisner, including 2 trios, one with cello, another with clarinet. We are very excited about that. Also we are planning to do an album of Piazzolla and an album of Balkan music, but that will happen later.

*Question:* What will you play at your concert here?

*Azabagic:* Here is my program:

Joaquin Rodrigo: *Invocacion y danza*

H. Villa-Lobos: Five Preludes

Francisco Tarrega: Variations on "Carnival in Venice"

Vojislav Ivanovic: Café pieces

Vicente Asencio : *Collectici intim: La Serenor, La Joya, La Calma, La Gaubanca, La Frisanca*

*Question:* What guitar are you playing these days? Does it like to travel?

*Azabagic:* I play cedar top guitar made by Thomas Humphrey. It does not like particularly to travel, but I am afraid it is not up to it to decide...ha ha...

*Question:* You have a busy year ahead of solo and duo performances around the world. When do you find time to rehearse new repertoire? And when do you have time to change your strings?

*Azabagic:* Oh, I change the strings usually a few days before the performance. It takes 15 to 30 minutes to do it, but rehearsing and learning new pieces is a bigger problem. We just decide to schedule something new to play at some concerts and commit ourselves to it, and just by being very disciplined about practice time we make it happen. There is no way to learn anything new without putting enough hours into it, the formula is quite simple, it is just a question of making yourself do it.

**Be sure to join us on March 4th in Sundin Hall to hear Denis Azabagic and his well-traveled, cedar-topped Humphrey guitar!**

# Concert Spotlight: Xuefei Yang

When Xuefei Yang makes her Twin Cities debut on Saturday, April 8th, it will be just the latest in a long line of firsts for this dynamic young performer. Born in Beijing, China, in 1977, she began playing the guitar at the age of 7. Four years later, she won her first award, 2nd prize at the Beijing Senior Guitar Competition, as the only child competitor. She was the first guitarist to enter a music school in China. After graduation from the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, she became the first guitarist from China to study in the United Kingdom, and the first guitarist to receive an international scholarship from the U.K.'s Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music for postgraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where she moved in 2000.

Since then, she has been based in England, and has established an international career with recitals throughout Europe, the U.S., and Asia. She graduated from the Royal Academy in 2002, with distinction and having won a prize for exceptional academic achievement. She has won awards at several important competitions in the U.S. and Australia, and has released two CDs, the second on the U.S.-based GSP label. That CD, entitled *Si Ji*, was released in the spring of 2005 and contains music inspired by her homeland (see review, below). Yang has these comments on the CD (from the GSP website): "Si Ji in Chinese is 'Four Seasons'. We have chosen it to be the title of this 'China' inspired album.[...] As a musician, I feel a responsibility to communicate between different cultures and people through my music. As an artist from China, I would like to infuse the culture of my country in my music. As a guitarist, I hope to make a small contribution towards expanding the guitar repertoire, exploring new possibilities and enriching the techniques for the instrument."

Yang has received the attention and support of many important artists. At the age of 12, she was given her choice of guitars from the studio of Masaru Kohno, accompanied by the master luthier himself. Two years later, at her Madrid debut, composer Joaquin Rodrigo was in the audience. In 1995, guitarist John Williams heard her play in Beijing and arranged for a friend to give her his Smallman guitar.

## CD Review by Kuan Teoh

*Overview:* Xuefei Yang's new CD release, *Si Ji*, contains five traditional and modern Chinese pieces arranged for guitar. The other tracks consist of "China inspired" pieces written for guitar.

*First Impressions:* Wow! I was immediately captivated by the first piece, "Yi Dance," and that's just the beginning! Before I knew it I was almost a full hour into the CD. My coffee had finished brewing and I was at the start of Stephen Funk Pearson's "South China Sea Peace" when all of a sudden I received what could be best described as a reality check. I decided to pour a cup of good Dunn Bros. dark roast my friend Bob Owen had so gently roasted the previous morning.

*The Music:* All the pieces contain a definite Chinese influence. The themes and motifs are mostly derived from Chinese folk idioms, the odd one out being "Mayila," an arrangement by Gerald Garcia that could easily pass for an Andrew York piece. Listeners will immediately recognize the familiar five note pentatonic scales that are so prevalent in Chinese music. With the exception of Stephen Funk Pearson's composition, there are few harmonic surprises and plenty of expressive playing interlaced with some virtuoso tremolo sections.

*Highlights:* I particularly liked "Yi Dance" and "Heavenly Bird." "Yi Dance" is a piece originally written for pipa by Chinese composer Wang Huiran and transcribed for guitar by Yang. It starts off with what I would describe as a bird call tremolo motif. It serves as a prelude and Yang manages to summarize the whole piece, from a peaceful morning, (my imagery) to grassy meadows, to ominous skies, and back to an uneasy peace all in a span of 45 seconds. The rest of the piece is an expansion of the prelude. The theme is played with incredible sensitivity, with each note given its due. It is almost as if she uses microdynamics within a crescendo, the dynamic equivalent of playing rubato and accelerando at the same time. It's interesting, surprising, pleasant, and inspiring. "Heavenly Bird" is a traditional piece arranged for guitar by Japanese guitarist Shuko Shibata. It follows an emotionally charged movement called "Land Circus" by composer Dietmar Ungerrank. Although the music is once again played with Yang's beautiful touch, it's the transition from slight dissonance, to silence, to peace, that grabbed my attention. I immediately felt a sense of calmness upon listening to the first few notes, a strange catharsis of sorts, going from aggravation to tranquility in five seconds. I'm going to include Stephen Funk Pearson's composition for prepared guitar as a highlight. According to the liner notes, an additional saddle is placed under the strings. Although this gives the guitar twelve strings, the guitar is actually tuned as if it's two sets of six strings with two different tunings! I can only describe it as a slightly off unison, but not like a bad guitar duo. The result is an instrument that looks like a guitar but sounds like a koto; very intriguing.

*Final Thoughts:* This is a CD that can grow on you. If anything at all, this CD serves as a great introduction to music written in the Chinese style. The traditional themes remind us of simpler times while the modern pieces offer us a glimpse of what's possible on the guitar. I do have one disappointment, if I can even call it a disappointment at all, and that is the fact that there was little contemporary Chinese music featured on this CD. It does not diminish the quality of this recording, but more would have been, well, nice. Overall, four stars out of five for the selection of new music, for the excellent playing, and for a good recording.

Please join us on April 8th to hear this great music in person!

# Concert Spotlight: Gilbert Biberian

On Saturday, April 29th, for the first time in over two decades, internationally renowned composer and guitarist Gilbert Biberian comes to the Twin Cities. His Sundin Hall concert, which will feature his own compositions, is both long overdue and highly anticipated. Born in Istanbul of Greek/Armenian descent, Biberian's ethnic roots are integral to his compositions. He studied at Trinity College of Music (in England, graduating in 1968). In 1965, a French government grant took him to that country to study with Ida Presti and Alexandre Lagoya. He studied composition with James Patten, Elisabeth Lutyens, and Hans Keller, as well as widening and enriching his musical knowledge by working with non-guitarists Anthony Kinsella (piano) and Vic Bennett (clarinet).

Following a successful debut at the Wigmore Hall, he was invited to work with the London Sinfonietta and Pierre Boulez, Luciano Berio, the Nash Ensemble, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and many others. He has played at the Proms, at Covent Garden, and has performed concertos and given solo recitals worldwide.

He has always enthusiastically encouraged and championed the creation of new compositions for guitar. New works have been written for and/or dedicated to him (for solo and ensemble) by James Patten, Elisabeth Lutyens, Reginald Smith Brindle, Alfred Nieman, Charles Camilleri, David Bedford, Roger Williams, Glen Morgan, Robert Keeley, Jeffrey Joseph, Kenneth Paige, Daniel Sturm, Vojislav Ivanovic, Betty Roe, Ivor Mairants, Geoffrey Burgon, Aurelio Peruzzi, Judith Bingham, Monique Cecconi-Botella, Ottavio Negro, and Luis Morales Giacomani.

In addition to his pioneering work in chamber music, and always in search of exciting possibilities for the guitar, he expanded the role of the instrument by combining with mime in three works—"Pierrot," "Harlequin's Toccata," and "Colombine," that are now successfully established as stage and concert pieces. He has produced a great number of compositions, not only for solo and ensemble guitar but also for all string instruments including a concerto for guitar, cello and 19 strings that received its world premiere at the Havana International Festival of Guitar in Cuba in May of 1992. His guitar compositions have been recorded and performed by countless guitarists. Biberian's compositions have been published in England, Italy, Holland, Canada, and the U.S. To learn more about him and the program for his April concert, we contacted him by email. Here are his eloquent and thoughtful replies:

*Question:* You've published works for a variety of instruments and combinations of instruments. Do you start a composition with specific instrument(s) in mind?

*Biberian:* Yes, I do because usually they are requests or commissioned works for specific instruments, for people I know and for special occasions.

*Question:* As an established concert guitarist yourself, do you feel your works for solo guitar are the compositions closest to your heart?

*Biberian:* Naturally, they are because since their composition I have played them myself and developed an ever-deeper relationship with them. Of course, my view of these works is deeply personal, as the language in which they are cast—both poetically and technically—sprang from the innermost parts of me, they are most familiar to me. In a way you are asking me who is my favorite child. As a parent it is difficult to have and express a preference. Are you a parent yourself? Could you answer this question? I have many other works, for other instruments, that are very close to my heart. You have to have lots of room in your heart for all that!

*Question:* In addition to you writing for others, other composers have written works for you. Do you feel there continues to be a strong community of composers for classical guitar?

*Biberian:* Not as much now as was the case 30 years ago, alas! Back in the 70s there was a huge groundswell (and, perhaps, even a peak) of interest in the guitar as a uniquely expressive instrument and as a truly musical resource. There were a lot of us who were highly committed and genuinely attracted by the language of our time. Composers responded to that, all too naturally, because they found kindred spirits in us. We gravitated towards each other. This combination of mutual and reciprocal interest was most stimulating and gave birth to a large and in many cases wonderful music. At that time I used to say that we were living in the "Golden Age" of the guitar, emphatically because of this very mutual and reciprocal stimulation and inspiration. However, my impression these last 20 or so years is that this is not happening either as much or with as much excitement. Contemporary music became hard on the ear; it makes considerable demands both on the ear and on the mind; trends have changed from the serious to the "easy"; promoters, driven as much by pressure from the record industry, have imposed a more commercial, less adventurous choice on musicians and audiences alike. So, talented and prominent composers are not as strongly attracted to the instrument.

*Question:* How do you assess the future and present prospects for classical guitar composition?

*Biberian:* The future is always pregnant with promise and potentialities, isn't it? I always hope that we or, more specifically, I, will be the midwife to the next great work or masterpiece! I am optimistic. There is no other way to be, is there? Always with hope and optimism. There are a handful of composers working with the guitar, writing for it and playing it, who hold great promise, and some fulfill it. In the case of Dusan Bogdanovic we have a mature talent, who has fulfilled much, producing first-rate stuff; and there are youngsters like Evis Sammouris and others who are doing great work.

Another name I need to add to the list of composers alive today doing fine work is none other than your very own Daniel Sturm. I have known his music in

Biberian, *continued on p. 9*

# Concert Spotlight: Jeffrey Van

by Joe Haus

It was a bitterly cold winter evening when I sat down in front of a fireplace with Jeffrey Van and a bottle of his finest brandy—aw, who am I kidding? The snow was melting outside and we had green tea and cookies at his dinner table. Van had just sent off an e-mail with a proposed noontime concert program to Minnesota Orchestra violinist and writer Julie Ayer. He and I set to work discussing his MGS-sponsored solo concert on Sunday, March 19th, and other activities.

The year started off very well for Jeffrey Van. Twin Cities Public Television broadcast a new documentary about 19th-century railroad baron James J. Hill, with a soundtrack composed by Van and performed by him along with members of the Hill House Chamber Players. He performed music of Falla and Granados arranged for cello and guitar on the Hill House Chamber Players concerts of January 30th and February 6th. And, one week prior to his solo concert for MGS, he will participate in the Elliott Carter Festival, a joint venture of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and the U of MN School of Music, performing Carter's "Luimen" for trumpet, trombone, guitar, mandolin, harp, and vibraphone. Van also just received an invitation to perform his *Reflexiones Concertantes* (a concerto for two guitars and chamber orchestra) in Chile in 2007.

When I asked about his upcoming solo guitar concert for the MGS Local Artists Series on Sunday, March 19th, Van replied that he feels starting a guitar concert with a shorter piece is a good idea. It allows the audience to get settled and adjust their ears to the sound of the guitar, and helps the performer settle into the concert as well. To this end, he was thinking about beginning with a Prelude, Gavotte, and Gigue by the baroque composer Ludovico Roncalli. These three short movements are drawn from the E minor and G major suites. The prelude begins with a characteristically resonant minor chord, which makes a nice "announcement" that the guitarist and the music have started! This will be followed by one of Van's own works, *Fantasia on a Theme of Alfonso Ferrabosco*. Consisting of an extended series of musings on the eighth lute song from Ferrabosco's *Book of Ayers* of 1609, this is a slight revision of a work he wrote in 1997. As he remarked, "Just because you write a piece doesn't mean you automatically have it memorized. It's still a separate process to learn it for a performance."

Fernando Sor is considered one of the very best of the early 19th-century guitarist/composers. In addition to a vast number of guitar solos, Sor composed ballets, operas, chamber music, and symphonies, and his guitar pieces are richer harmonically, with more attention to voice leading, than those of most of his contemporaries. Sor is one of Van's favorite composers, and it is rare that he doesn't program a Sor piece on his concerts. For the

March recital, he plans to play an *Andante Cantabile & Minuet*.

To wrap up the first half of the concert, Van will play several Villa-Lobos etudes. The etudes are the most challenging and dramatic of the composer's many pieces for the guitar. They are strong works, and very guitaristic, showcasing Villa-Lobos's unique way of exploiting the technical and musical potential of the instrument. Van plans to play Nos. 8, 11, and 12. And maybe even No. 7.

Now, what's a concert without an intermission? Jeff Van has cleverly scheduled one for the middle of his.

A little "tribute to Segovia" will start the second half of the program, with two of the maestro's many transcriptions flanking one of his own compositions: Prelude op. 16, no. 4 by Alexander Scriabin, *Estudio sin luz* by Segovia, and *Romanza* by Robert Schumann. Vintage Segovia repertoire, and a nice way to ease an audience back into a concert.

Next will be *Tiento* by Maurice Ohana, a composer of both French and Spanish background. Written in 1957, *Tiento* was very much influenced by Ohana's interest in Flamenco and "canto jondo" but blended with contemporary harmonies, and it is a powerful and poignant work.

As a contrast to the heaviness of the Ohana piece, Van plans to play *Campanas del Alba*, a lovely tremolo piece by Eduardo Sainz de la Maza. Eduardo was the brother of Regino Sainz de la Maza, the dedicatee of and the first guitarist to play Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*.

To end the concert Van will perform *Serie Americana* by Hector Ayala, a 20th century Argentinian composer and guitarist. This is a seven-movement work that features the musical genres of six different South American countries. Chris Kachian came across a CD entitled *Guitar Music of Argentina* and passed it on to Van, who was captivated by it and after some effort to get the sheet music to the suite, he's very happy to be the first one around these parts to play it.

This is a nicely rounded guitar recital program and should provide a great afternoon at the Lloyd Ultan Recital Hall (in Ferguson Hall) on the West Bank campus of the U of MN. Join us there on Sunday, March 19th, at 2:00 pm. And it's free as part of the MGS Local Artists Series!



Visit the MGS Web site:

<<http://www.mnguitar.org>>

# Concert Spotlight: Sonntag and Richter

**O**n Sunday, April 2, 2006, at 4 pm, Dawn Sonntag (voice) and Annett Richter (lute) are presenting a concert for the Minnesota Guitar Society's Local Artist Series (sharing the stage with Todd Tipton). This event will take place at the University of St. Thomas (Brady Center, Music Department) and will feature baroque music for voice and lute by 17th-century women composers.

Sonntag and Richter met as doctoral students at the University of Minnesota in early 2005 with a mutual interest in the study and performance of early music for voice and lute. Along with guest lutenist Phil Rukavina, Richter accompanied Sonntag on her first doctoral degree recital at the University of Minnesota for an all-women-composers program, presenting music by Barbara Strozzi. In addition, Sonntag and Richter gave a concert at the Norwegian Lutheran Memorial Church in Minneapolis last October and performed at the Minnesota Guitar Open Stage last December. Currently, the duo is working toward Sonntag's second doctoral recital as well as a performance with the University of Minnesota's newly revived Early Music Ensemble this spring with music by Francesca Caccini.

## About the Artists



Lyric soprano Dawn Sonntag began her vocal studies with Yolanda-Marculescu Stern at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where she also studied piano and trumpet. After completing her BM in voice performance at the University of Texas El Paso, Dawn spent nine years in Germany, where she performed professionally as both a vocalist and collaborative

pianist, while also completing graduate level conservatory studies in both vocal performance and collaborative piano at the Hochschule für Kirchenmusik in Heidelberg, Germany.

Sonntag is the recipient of several vocal awards and scholarships, including first-place awards for both voice and piano in the Inge-Pittler Lied competition in Heidelberg. She has appeared as a soloist and recitalist in Milwaukee, San Antonio, El Paso, Heidelberg, Frankfurt, Saarbrücken, Columbus, and Minneapolis, performing repertoire from early music to jazz and 20th-century music. Sonntag is currently pursuing doctoral studies in vocal performance with Wendy Zaro-Mullins and in composition with Alex Lubet at the University of Minnesota.

Annett Richter, classical guitarist by training, began studying lute in 2002 when she attended the Baroque Performance Institute at Oberlin Conservatory for the

first time. She has become a regular attendee at this annual summer workshop and has been studying baroque continuo lute playing there under lutenist Lucas Harris. She has accompanied singers and instrumentalists in a variety of baroque ensemble settings in master classes and concerts at the Baroque Performance Institute. In the Twin Cities, Richter has appeared in recital with violinist Kate McWilliams and has given guest lectures on the history of the lute at the University of St. Thomas and at the University of Minnesota. Richter plays a 10-course lute by Jacob van de Geest.

Richter is a native of Halle, Germany, and holds the equivalent of an MA in British and American Studies from Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg. In 1993, she came to the U.S. as an exchange student at Montana State University in Bozeman, where she studied American history and music history. After moving to the Twin Cities in 1998, Richter began graduate studies in music at the University of Minnesota where she completed master's degrees in musicology and in guitar performance as a student of Jeffrey Van. As a musicologist, Richter's research interests focus on late 19th-century African-American music and American music and painting, folk music in 20th-century America, and issues of music and gender in Elizabethan England. Currently, she is working on her doctorate in musicology at the University of Minnesota. Her dissertation examines Missouri painter Thomas Hart Benton as a folk musician and his connection to American folk and early country music.

As a guitarist, Richter was trained at the Music Conservatory Johann Joachim Quantz in Merseburg, Germany, and later at the Music Conservatory Halle, Germany. In the U.S., she has studied and performed as soloist and in ensemble settings under Christopher Parkening, David Brandon, and John Sutherland at the Christopher Parkening Master Class held annually at Montana State University. For a number of years, she attended the Classical Guitar Summer Workshop at the Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati, directed by Clare Callahan. Among others, Richter has performed at the annual University of Minnesota School of Music String Gala and in master classes with the Amadeus Guitar Duo, Carlos Perez, and Alieksey Vianna. She has appeared as guest artist with the University of Minnesota Concert Choir and is a founding member of the St. Paul Classical Guitar Trio.

**For concert and ticket information,  
call 612-677-1151.**

# Concert Spotlight: Todd Tipton

Sharing the stage with Dawn Sonntag and Annett Richter on April 2nd, as the other half of the season's final Local Artists Series concert, will be guitarist and teacher Todd Tipton. Tipton has performed throughout the United States either as a soloist or as a guitarist in the Army Bands. Highlight performances include Baltimore's Inner Harbor on Independence Day, the Miss America Parade in Atlantic City, Return of Troops from the Gulf, the United Nations in New York, Rosenbach Museum and Library in Philadelphia, and the George Washington Masonic National Memorial Auditorium in Washington, D.C.

Tipton's performing interests emphasize modern composers such as Robert Martin, Jeffrey Van, Paul Fetler, Stephen Paulus, Libby Larson, Anthony Glise, Konstantin Vassiliew, and James McGuire. As a performer, Tipton likes to focus on obscure music that he feels deserves more attention. For example, the music he will perform on April 2nd will include works by Giuseppe Antonio Brescianello (c.1690–c.1758). Also there will be contemporary compositions such as the "Sonata #3" of Anthony Glise, a new solo guitar work by Paul Fetler, a work by Al DiMeola, and a performance of Tipton's own solo guitar work, "Elegy" (2005).

Tipton's teachers have included Ricardo Cobo in New York and Julian Gray in Baltimore. Tipton was also a

student of Rodney Stucky, and currently studies with Jeffrey Van. He has performed in masterclasses for Renato Butturi, Eliot Fisk, Eduardo Fernandez, Anthony Glise, Sharon Isbin, Dale Kavanagh, Hazel Ketchum, Thomas Kirchoff, John Parris, Tom Patterson, Steve Robinson, Jack Sanders, Stanley Yates, and Andrew York. He holds a BM from the University of Kentucky and an MM from the University of Minnesota, and is a candidate for the Doctorate of Musical Arts at the University of Minnesota.



Tipton's main interest is teaching. Rodney Stucky, a leading pioneer in children's guitar education hailed Tipton as "a very gifted and motivated guitarist with an uncommon aptitude for teaching." Jeffrey Van wrote, "Todd is passionate about teaching, and dedicates himself to this with utmost energy and purpose. He is always extremely successful in producing a high level of achievement with every student."

Tipton currently teaches at the University of Minnesota and directs the guitar program at Shattuck- St. Mary's School. He also dedicates some time to his private studio in Minneapolis.

Please join us on Sunday, April 2nd, at 4 pm, at the University of St. Thomas's Brady Center in St. Paul, for an exciting concert by the duo of Dawn Richter and Annett Richter, followed by solo classical guitarist Todd Tipton.

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## Biberian, *continued from p. 5*

general and his guitar works in particular for nearly 30 years. I had the great pleasure of playing his *Concerto for Harp, Guitar and Orchestra: Concerto for Prague* in July 1999. Here is a composer who has kept his feet on the ground and contact with his audience. It is a most wonderful piece and I wish you could have a performance of it right there in St. Paul!

Otherwise, as to the present...despite my devotion to optimism, I have observed a preoccupation with the commercial, with seeking fame, that has produced some very superficial music that occupies the attention of players and audiences on a very large scale. This work, I think, is not very serious and I don't think of lasting value. This attitude seems to have killed the opportunity to bring forth something exceptional and great and I think this is a shame.

*Question:* How do you balance the roles of composer, performer, and teacher?

*Biberian:* Very badly!!! Not only has it always been a conflict, in terms of the availability of time (what to spend the finite time available on?) but, in this day and age more than ever before, I think, is an impossible task, an impossibly difficult task. Maybe I'm getting old...But, somehow, the work gets done despite the need to provide for life's practicalities.

*Question:* Can you tell us about the summer school for guitar that you direct?

*Biberian:* This is an annual event I am very proud of! My chief concern is to provide a truly musical, useful, and unforgettable experience for the student. I and my colleagues proclaim the guitar as a truly musical instrument. We give high importance to training the students

as musicians (be they professional or amateur), in this one-week-long course, with the best tuition money can buy. We provide classes in solo guitar playing, of course, and in ensembles. Classes in aural training and singing are integral to the holistic approach we have adopted. We promote all types of guitar styles and we have had the best exponents appear in the nightly concerts.

The course happens in the village where I live and the entire community gets involved as hosts to the students and faculty as well as a ready-made audience for the concerts. It's a true "festival," a great and unusual experience for everyone. I invite you all to come and see for yourselves.

*Question:* Your composing and performing career has taken you around the world. Have you performed in Minnesota before?

*Biberian:* Yes, I think it was in 1984 at Macalester College.

*Question:* What will be on the program for your April concert here?

*Biberian:* The major part of the program will be devoted to my own work. I have put the emphasis on arrangements of folk songs and original compositions based on folk songs. I will also play music by Ponce and Chavez that reflect this theme.

*Question:* What guitar will you play at the concert?

*Biberian:* I will play my marvelous 2003 Christopher Dean.

Join us on April 29th to hear Gilbert Biberian and his marvelous music.

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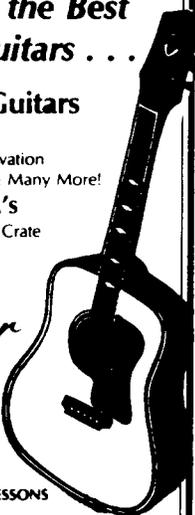
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- **Feb. 15**, 8 p.m., Joan Griffith, Brady Educational Center
- **Feb. 19**, 3 p.m., MGS Open Stage
- **March 29**, 8 p.m., Anthony Titus, Brady Educational Center
- **April 2**, 4 p.m., MGS Local Artists Series, Todd Tipton, Annett Richter guitar and Dawn Sontag soprano, Brady Educational Center
- **April 23**, 3 p.m., MGS Open Stage FINALE, Brady Educational Center
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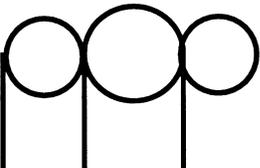
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