

Guitarist

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2006–2007 Sundin Hall Concert Series To Feature



Earl Klugh, David Serva,
William Kanengiser, Lorenzo Micheli,
Jérôme Ducharme, Duo Erato,
Nigel North, and Guitarathons!

Also In This Issue

Remembering Dennis Burns, Dan Estrem on Recording the Guitar,
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News and Notes

Changes to MGS Board

With regret, we announce the departure of Managing Director Nancy Frederiksen, who resigned effective June 30th to pursue other interests, including more time to play the guitar! We thank her for making the last two years so successful for our Society through her efforts in writing grants and coordinating our concert series. Taking over as Managing Director is Paul Hintz, who held the position from 2001 to 2003.

We also regret to announce the departure of Jim Campbell, longtime MGS Treasurer, who is contemplating a move out of state (career related). His work in keeping our books in order was invaluable and will be missed. He'll be missed at the Sundin box office, too. We welcome long-time MGS member Patrick Strother to our Board. He is CEO of Strother Communications Group, and we look forward to benefiting from his expertise in helping us publicize our concerts and other activities.

OpenStage to Continue

Despite the passing of OpenStage founder Dennis Burns in April (see next page), the MGS Board hopes to continue this important forum. OpenStage is a structured but informal way for guitarists of any level to experience the joy of playing for each other. Details will appear in our next issue, but mark your calendars, and start polishing your renditions of classical, folk, and jazz favorites. Get-togethers at Brady Education Center (University of St. Thomas, St. Paul campus) are planned for the following Sunday afternoons: October 1st, November 5th, February 4th, and April 22nd.

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>. 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 your items listed, email Al Norton at <apnorton@msn.com>.

Contributions Welcome

Send us your news—gigs, concerts, CDs, etc.—by July 15th to appear in the September/October issue.

Volunteer Opportunities

We need help distributing the newsletter, especially in the northeast corner of the metro (White Bear Lake and Stillwater) and the southwest (Savage, Edina, and Bloomington). Time commitment: 1 hour, every other month. Contact the editor for details.

Future Issues

Our September/October issue will profile our first Sundin Hall performer, flamenco guitar master David Serva, and October's artist, Italian Lorenzo Micheli. We'll have information about our 2006–2007 Local Artists series as well. And expect to read about an exciting new guitar performance opportunity for young players. Get your copy without leaving home! Become an MGS member today! See the form at the back of this issue.

Contact Editor Paul Hintz

You can reach him by email at <phintz@divcs.org> or by phone 651-699-6827.

Directions to Sundin Hall on the Hamline U. Campus

From I-94, head north on Snelling Avenue in St. Paul, past University Avenue to Hewitt Avenue. Turn right, Sundin Hall is on your left, a half-block east of Snelling.

Free parking is available one block past the hall, in lots off Hewitt (on your right) or off Pascal (1 block north).

For Concert and Ticket Information call 612-677-1151.

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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.

Remembering Dennis Burns (1950–2006)

Dennis Burns was an amateur on the guitar, an amateur in the best and truest sense—someone who loved the instrument and devoted immense energy and passion to playing it. A guitarist since his teens and a long-time member of the Minnesota Guitar Society, Dennis passed away in April. His loss is felt by his family and many friends, and will be felt by the Society. His inestimable contribution was as creator and sustainer of our OpenStage program.

OpenStage

OpenStage began in fall of 2001 when Dennis approached members of the MGS Board with a unique idea: an ongoing series of informal get-togethers for guitarists to share music and, just as importantly, overcome barriers of shyness and anxiety that stood in the way of their experiencing the joy of playing music for others. Thanks to Dennis's persistence, OpenStage was born.



photo by Bob Owen

One of Dennis's many gifts was his ability to create a warm, supportive atmosphere, and plan and host the events in a way that perfectly balanced the informality of a jam session with the formality of a small recital. Thanks to him, and the participation of a core group of regulars plus many guests, OpenStage was an immediate and continuing success.

OpenStage grew out of Dennis's own experience as a musician. His love of the guitar started as he learned the folk music of the day (the mid- to late 1960s). It led him to study at different times with several of the best-known teachers in the Twin Cities, including Will Agar, Jeff Van, John Holmquist, and Dan Sturm. It led him to the classical guitar when he was in his early thirties. He and his wife Ruth were regulars at all MGS concerts, and other classical guitar events such as Segovia's last concert in the Twin Cities. Classical music gave him his greatest enjoyment, and his greatest challenge. Part of the classical guitarist's challenge is tremolo technique. Ruth Burns remembers him sitting down next to her on the couch one night not long ago and saying, "I think I'm finally getting the hang of it!" Another part of the challenge is note-perfect performance and the anxiety that can create. His friend and fellow guitarist, MGS Board member Bob Owen, recalls many conversations about the challenge of overcoming anxiety symptoms while playing. OpenStage provided the place to meet that challenge..

Friends Remember

As part of the memorial for Dennis, an online guestbook was created for him by his friend, MGS Board

member Kuan Teoh. Dan Estrem's entry speaks to the effect OpenStage had on Dennis, and the effect he had on others:

"Dennis and I got to know each other through the OpenStage series that he made a huge success. It was impossible for anyone to not like Dennis. He was one of the most friendly and humble people that I've met. If there were a poll taken of the OpenStage players as to who was the most improved guitarist over the years...Dennis would be the winner. When we first began his hands were trembling and he could hardly get through a song. The last time I saw him play I was inspired to track down one of the pieces he performed...it was great. My sympathy to family and friends."—Dan Estrem

The guestbook holds many similar remembrances of Dennis:

"... I met Dennis through the 'open stages', and was always struck with his warmth and kindness. ..."

—Eduardo Colon

"You were always nice, polite and trying to help everybody. We will miss you."—Guillermo Etienne

"Thank you so much for your down-to-earth warmth and never-ending generosity. I also appreciate your dedication to the MN Guitar Society's Open Stage, where you always made me feel like a million bucks! Ruth and Tracy, my sympathy for your loss of this most incredible man."—Robert Everest

"I very much appreciate how Dennis initiated and persisted, making the Minnesota Guitar Society OpenStage a success. I really enjoyed how he would play folk as well as classical, especially his singing of Bob Dylan's "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right." I felt like he was a friend."—Al Norton

Perhaps Dan Sturm says it as well as it can be said:

"Dennis was a student of mine around 1985. However prepared he was for the lesson he always appeared ready, and sporting a warm generous smile. Over the years we lost touch but we reconnected through the Society. It made me so happy to see his eager zealous will in action making our Society a society for all guitarists. It's rare to find such zeal-in-action, all for the love of an instrument and its players. He once gave me the gift of two fine crystal beer glasses which he purchased in Germany. Dennis was a chap composed of a crystalline material precious and singular. We shall all miss him greatly."

2006–2007 OpenStage Schedule

Sundays: Oct 1st, Nov 5th, Feb 4th, Apr 22nd
All meetings at 3 pm at University of St. Thomas
Brady Education Center.

See MGS Web site for updates and details.
More info in next newsletter.

Concert Spotlight: Next Season

2006–2007 Sundin Concert Season

Since the Minnesota Guitar Society was founded over 20 years ago, a core part of our mission has been the presentation of concerts by world-class guitarists. Over the years, we've hosted some of the greatest names in classical, jazz, flamenco, and acoustic guitar, from established virtuosos like Sharon Isbin and David Russell to rising stars like Ana Vidovic and the Katona Twins. The upcoming 2006–2007 season will live up to those high standards. It's our 11th year of presenting concerts at acoustically magnificent Sundin Hall on the campus of Hamline University in St. Paul.

To be certain of getting tickets to all these great events, join our Society! You get special prices on tickets, advance mailings, and a copy of each issue of the newsletter mailed directly to you! What a great deal! Fill out the coupon on the inside back cover, and mail it with your check today!

Future issues of this newsletter will bring detailed information about each concert, but read on for an overview of the season's highlights.

Saturday September 23, David Serva

Our season kicks off with the first Twin Cities appearance by flamenco guitar virtuoso David Serva. David Serva's pure flamenco style follows the heritage of his teacher, the great master Diego del Gastor. Serva has accompanied such historical figures of Flamenco as Juan Talega, Manolito de María, La Perla de Cádiz, and Anzonini del Puerto, more contemporary artists including Fernanda de Utrera, Manuel Agujetas, Miguel Funi, Manolete, Mario Maya, and Blanca del Rey, and

younger figures such as Joaquín Ruiz, Soledad Barrios, and Jose Torres. He has played in Flamenco nightclubs and festivals all over Spain, and in theater and concert performances throughout Europe, North and South America, and the Far East. Serva was featured in the 1990 Biennial de Guitarra Flamenca in Seville on the nights dedicated to the gypsies of the Flamenco

towns of Morón and Lebrija. He was assistant to the composer and stage guitarist in the original production of *Man of La Mancha* and in the Broadway revival of the musical at the Marquis Theater. First guitarist for several years for the acclaimed company "Noche Flamenca," he has received two grants from "Meet the Composer" for collaborations with choreographers. His solo concert in Toronto (Son Gitano en America) is available on compact disc, and he has also recorded extensively with three generations of the Agujetas family of singers

from Jerez de la Frontera, with Antonio Vizárraga, and with Rafael Jiménez.

Saturday October 21, Lorenzo Micheli

Since winning first prize in several world-class guitar competitions in the late 1990s (including the Guitar Foundation of America in 1999), Italian Lorenzo Micheli has established an international career as a soloist and chamber music player. He has several recordings available (most on the Naxos label) and a performance video was released by Mel Bay in 2001. The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* calls him "absolutely astonishing." Join us in October and see why you'll agree.



Friday November 17, Jérôme Ducharme

Canadian guitarist Jérôme Ducharme is the 2005 winner of the Guitar Foundation of America International Competition. He began his musical studies at the Cultural Center of Joliette in 1990 with André Morissette. Other teachers have included Pierre Morin and Clément Canac Marquis. In April 2000, after having been a student of Jean Vallieres, Ducharme graduated from the Music Conservatory of Montreal and was awarded a prize of distinction. He later spent a year studying with Oscar Ghiglia and Stephan Schmidt in Switzerland. In addition to his 2005 GFA prize, Ducharme has been a multiple prize winner in various other competitions including the 2004 GFA International Competition, The Guitare-Antony in France, Montreal's Guitarre-Lachine of 2003, and the 2000 Festival-Concurs de Lanaudiere. Recent performances have included an appearance in 2005 with the Montréal Symphonic Orchestra for Donizetti's opera *Don Pasquale*. Featured performer in the Montreal Guitar Society's 2004 concert series, Ducharme also has performed on SRC-CBC radio in Canada. His Sundin Hall concert will be his Twin Cities debut, and is part of his GFA prize-winning tour.



Saturday December 9, Jazz Guitarathon

This popular annual event, one of two fund-raising concerts for the Society, always features a sample of the many first-rate jazz players in our area. It's your chance to hear the best in solo (and duo) jazz guitar in a rare concert setting.

All concerts at
8 pm at Sundin
Hall, Hamline
University

For reservations
call 612-677-1151

Concert Spotlight: Next Season

Next Season, *continued from p. 4*

Saturday January 27, William Kanengiser

William Kanengiser is one of the best-known classical guitarists in North America, both as a soloist and as a member of the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet. He won First Prize in the Concert Artists Guild Competition as well as major international competitions in Toronto and Paris. His unique repertoire ranges from dazzling arrangements of Mozart, Handel, and Bartók to his innovative excursions into the music of Eastern Europe and the Caribbean.



photo by Blake Little

Praised by the *Los Angeles Times* for his “dizzying execution” and “exceeding vitality and warmth,”

his debut recording for GSP Records won an “INDIE” award for Best Classical Recording. In addition, he records for Sony Classical as a member of the LAGQ. Kanengiser has performed in recital and as guest soloist with orchestras in cities throughout the U.S., Canada, Europe, and Asia. His Sundin Hall concert marks his second solo concert in the Twin Cities, a long-overdue return engagement!

Saturday February 24, Duo Erato

Guitarists Risa Carlson and Martha Masters began working together as a duo while students of Manuel Barrueco at the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore. Named for the muse of lyric poetry and music, Duo Erato has impressed audiences and critics alike since they won first prize in the 1994 National Guitar Summer Workshop Competition for ensembles and were finalists in the 1994 Baltimore Chamber Music Awards. Their repertoire embraces works from all periods of the genre's

history, as well as new works and transcriptions. Their debut CD was released in October 2005 on GSP Records. Both Carlson and Masters have been GFA prizewinners as soloists, and are active as teachers as well as performers. Their Sundin Hall concert marks the Duo's Twin Cities debut.

Saturday March 17, Earl Klugh

Detroit native Earl Klugh's love of the nylon-string guitar began at the age of 13, when he and his mother watched an episode of *The Perry Como Show* that featured Chet Atkins. This spark ignited a career that spans four decades, with 13 Grammy awards for his more

than 30 recordings, worldwide tours, and collaborations with jazz icons George Benson and Bob James. A complex yet accessible artist and widely regarded as one of the finest fingerstyle guitarists of his generation, Klugh doesn't consider himself a “jazz” musician—yet he is an originator of the style now known as “smooth jazz.” In addition to his many platinum-selling group recordings, he has produced two landmark solo guitar CDs, *Solo Guitar* in the mid-90s, and *Naked Guitar*, released earlier this year and nominated for a Grammy award. Klugh's Sundin Hall concert is his Twin Cities solo debut, a rare opportunity to hear him in this intimate setting.



Saturday April 21, Nigel North

British lutenist Nigel North was first inspired to learn music at age 7, after hearing the early 60s instrumental pop group “The Shadows.” North first studied classical music on the violin and guitar, eventually discovering his real path in life, the lute, when he was 15. Like many Early Music pioneers, North is largely self taught on his instrument. He has for over 30 years developed a unique musical life as a teacher, accompanist, soloist, director, and writer. He is particularly well-known for his recordings of Bach, and was a member of the Early Music group “Romanesca.”



photo by Hanya Chlala

Saturday May 26, Classical Guitarathon

A guitarathon concert of local classical players was the very first event staged by our Society. It's been a tradition every since. Join us to celebrate the depth of classical guitar talent here in Minnesota. This concert is always fun, fast-paced, and a fundraiser for the Society.

The **D'Addario**[®]
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Learning Guitar in Minnesota

The usual Minnesota stereotype includes a lake cabin, a fishing rod, and dialogue right out of "Prairie Home Companion." A more accurate image might be a practice studio, a guitar, and discussion of the finer points of tremolo technique. That's because Minnesota not only is home to dozens of world-class guitarists (some world-famous, some not yet so), but also boasts the third largest guitar society in North America. Evidence of the deep love for the guitar in our state! Any guitarist who wants to learn new skills has lots of choices. In fact, the state motto ought to be Land of 10,000 Guitar Teachers. We have space to list just a few of the many friends and supporters of our Society who provide guitar instruction. A list of MGS members who teach privately will appear in a future issue. Check the display ads and classifieds in each issue for some of them. Many MGS members teach at area schools and stores. A few are noted below.

Minneapolis

MacPhail Center for Music has been an MGS partner for many years, presenting masterclasses by visiting concert artists and distributing our newsletter. MacPhail offers customized individual instruction for all ages, as well as group classes, small ensembles, and summer camps. Areas of specialization include Suzuki, classical, jazz, pop, folk, and rock music. Guitar-related classes and ensembles include Guitar for Children Class, Introductory Guitar Class 1, 2, and 3, Songwriting for Pop Musicians, Blues to Jazz Connection Ensemble, Jazz combos, and Rock and Blues bands. Guitar-related summer camps include Kids Rock (ages 10–13), Rock Week (ages 13–18), Jazz Camp (ages 12–18), and MacPhail Rocks (for adults). Guitar faculty include James Allen, Craig Anderson, Alan Johnston, Jerry Kosak, Jeff Lambert, Chris Olson, Paul Renz, Jean Seils, and Brent Weaver. Contact Guitar Dept. chair Craig Anderson at <Anderson.craig@macphail.org>.

Mount Olivet School of Music on 50th and Knox Ave. Private lesson, all ages and abilities. Instructors include Minneapolis Guitar Quartet member Jeff Lambert. See their ad on page 10, or call 612-767-2262.

Linden Hills House of Music on 43 and Upton Ave. Call founder Cindy Smedberg at 612-929-2291 about the array of teachers and lessons offered, and thank her for helping us distribute our newsletter.

Twin Tone Guitars on 34th and Lyndale provides repair services, sells new and used amps and guitars, and offers instruction in a variety of styles, with an emphasis on rock. Call them at 612-822-3334.

St. Paul

McNally-Smith College of Music in downtown St. Paul is an accredited institutional member of the National Association of Schools of Music, with degrees

and programs in Music Performance, Recording Technology, and Music Business. All degree/diploma programs offer a guitar major. Faculty include MGS members Kevin Daley and Chris Olson. Contact Guitar Dept. chair Paul Krueger at <pkruieger@mcnallysmith.edu>.

Cadenza Music on Snelling Avenue just south of Selby Selby is a St. Paul fixture and a long-time MGS newsletter advertiser and distributor. A roster of experienced teachers provide lessons in every style at every level, with a focus on folk, popular, and blues. See their eye-catching ad on page 11 or call them at 651-644-3611.

American Guitar Boutique on Snelling Avenue just south of Marshall has a high-tech approach to lessons that includes CD and video recording. Boutique amplifiers and guitars are a specialty. See their ad on page 10 or call them at 651-644-2333.

East Metro

Evans Music in White Bear Lake on Washington Square right off Hwy 61. A small, friendly store with personal service and instruction in all styles. Call them at 651-429-0236.

Stillwater Music on Chestnut St. An old store with a new owner and feel. Teachers include jazz stand-out Joel Shapira. Call them at 651-439-0036.

West Metro

La Musique in Minnetonka. Call 952-470-1133 for information about lessons.

My Music Store in Golden Valley offers guitars, amps, and more. The spacious teaching studios include a large room with a stage for student recitals, and a comfortable waiting area. Call them at 763-525-0311.

Trestman Music on Excelsior Blvd. in St. Louis Park. Offers guitars, amps, instruction, and copies of our newsletter. Call them at 952-920-8622.

North Metro

GuitarZone in Blaine packs an incredible array of guitars and amplifiers into a compact space. A large roster of instructors covers every style. See their ad on page 10 or call them at 763-757-8555.

Northern Pine Studio. Guitar, banjo, Suzuki, and more. Call Chris at 651-780-1625 for details.

South Metro

Apple Valley Guitar Academy. Classical/fingerstyle lessons from a master teacher who has written several books. Spacious, multi-media studio. They also have a teacher who specializes in training young children. Call 952-322-4329 or visit <www.AVGuitarAcademy.com>.

Groth Music in Bloomington. Instruments, instruction, sheet music. Call 952-884-4772.

Learning, continued on p. 7

Note-Worthy News

Vladislav Blaha Masterclass and Recitals in SE Minnesota

by Kerry Klungtvedt

It is a rare treat for southeastern Minnesota to have the opportunity to hear a live recital by a classical guitarist with an international reputation. Thanks to National Public Radio and several local businesses and institutions, we had that opportunity in March of 2006 when Vladislav Blaha from the Czech Republic graced us with performances in both Winona and Rochester.

Also a rare treat is for local guitar students to have a masterclass with a visiting artist. Thanks to a grant from the Minnesota Guitar Society, this took place on Thursday, March 9 in the Hill Theater at Rochester Community and Technical College. Three of my students—Ian Davis, Matthew Hickey, and Evan Hansen—each had a 20-minute lesson with Mr. Blaha. A handful of local guitar students and enthusiasts attended. Ian and Matthew each played pieces from the Suzuki Guitar School series Book 3 and Evan played a piece from the end of Book 1.

Mr. Blaha was very good with younger students (middle-school age). He emphasized right hand position, left hand legato, and tone production.

Readers unfamiliar with Mr. Blaha may want to visit his Web site at <<http://vlblaha.sky.cz/en/index.html>> for more information. Here's an excerpt from the bio at his site: "Vladislav Blaha studied at the Brno Conservatoire with Arnost Sadlik before going to the Liszt College of Music in Weimar, Germany, where he graduated as a student of Roland Zimmer. Masterclasses with Costas Cotsiolis and Abel Carlevaro, and, with the aid

of a British Council Fellowship, study in England with Gordon Crosskey (Royal Northern College of Music) and John W. Duarte in London completed his formal learning. Blaha achieved international recognition as winner in four international guitar competitions: Volos (Greece), Esztergom (Hungary), Kutna Hora (Czech Republic), and Markneukirchen (Germany). He received the medale bronze in the Radio France International Competition in Paris. He is professor of guitar at the Brno Conservatoire and on the faculty at the Janacek Academy of Music /Music College/ in Brno (Czech Republic). Blaha is president of the Czech Classical Guitar Society and since 1992 director of the International Guitar Festival and Courses BRNO."

Mr. Blaha's recitals were well attended and the audiences very appreciative of his skill and musicality. He expressed an interest in touring through this part of Minnesota again next year.

Kerry Klungtvedt is adjunct instructor of classical guitar at Rochester Community and Technical College and Crossroads College in Rochester. For the last 11 years he has maintained a private studio of Suzuki Guitar students.



photo by Kerry Klungtvedt

Learning, continued from p. 6

Homestead Pickin' Parlor at 66th and Penn in Richfield is the Twin Cities center for bluegrass and old-time acoustic music. Instruments, recordings, instruction. Call them at 612-861-3308.

LaVonne Wagener Music in Savage is a Twin Cities institution. Their large and varied inventory always includes new and vintage archtops. See their ad on page 10, or call 612-890-7288.

Various Locations

Schmitt Music is a music chain that offers lessons at each location, and helps MGS distribute our newsletter.

Music Go Round is a franchise music chain. The stores in St. Paul, Roseville, and Woodbury support MGS by distributing the newsletter.

Farther Afield

Post-secondary schools in the metro area, from technical and community colleges to the major universities, offer individual and classroom guitar instruction. Many offer music degrees that include guitar and have faculty

with strong MGS ties, as do schools nearby. Here are four:

Carleton College in Northfield. Offers private lessons and beginning class guitar, all taught by John Ellinger and James Flegel.

Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter. James McGuire teaches Jazz Guitar and Classical Guitar lessons. He also coaches the Gustavus Classical Guitar Ensemble. Two big bands with positions for jazz guitarists, and combos related to the jazz ensemble courses. Rick Orpen teaches Guitar Techniques, instruction for music ed majors, and Guitar Class, an introductory course.

St. John's University in Collegeville. O. Nicholas Rath teaches guitar, ensembles, and theory lab.

University of Wisconsin-River Falls. Just over the river and through the woods, UW-River Falls has a full music program including a major in guitar. Joseph Hagedorn, MGS past president and member of the Minneapolis Guitar Quartet, has taught there for many years.

Recording the Guitar: A Personal Odyssey

by Daniel Estrem

I don't pretend to be an expert when it comes to recording. Sometimes I've wandered into music stores and it makes my head spin when I hear certain people talk recording jargon. It can get about as complicated as you want. But even at the simplest level the rewards are immense.

First Efforts

My first serious recording effort in the early 1970s was at a commercial studio. The studio time was expensive and the end result was less than satisfying. There was a lot of pressure to "get it right—quick," which didn't make for a relaxed performance, even though a fair amount of time was spent with tape editing. For those not familiar with the editing process I should explain. A sound engineer records the musician as he or she performs a piece several times (each time is called a "take"). We guitarists (myself in particular) are prone to string buzzes, wrong notes, out-of-tune strings, etc. The magic of editing eliminates these annoying defects, if you can find the right places to edit. Prior to electronic editing the engineer had to physically cut the tape and splice it to another section. The end result was a master tape of several different takes seamlessly spliced together.

Duo Recordings

In the 1980s, John Holmquist and I recorded a series of six guitar duo CDs at Hamline United Methodist Church in St. Paul. I was on the Hamline University music faculty at the time, which was the key to inexpensive access to this marvelous recording environment. We would spend about 3 evenings of recording per project with an engineer, followed by at least 3 or 4 editing sessions. We were playing classical guitars, so it was important to have as little environmental noise as possible during the sessions. Many takes were scrapped because of jets flying over or loud vehicles driving by. I recall one session began just as the resident next to the church fired up his power mower. Fortunately, we were able to persuade him with a \$20 bill to do his mowing the next day. After the editing was complete the master tape went to the record company and was out of our

control. There were a couple of CDs where the company fiddled around with the overall sound enough to make us and the engineer more than irritated. We later found out that the person responsible for the alterations was virtually deaf in one ear.

I feel obligated to inform any serious guitarists who may have delusions about making a pile of money from recording contracts that the odds are against it. The reality is that the artists are the last ones to get paid. If you're after money you may want to consider becoming a recording engineer, although they may be an endangered species as more artists choose to do

home recording. We had an attorney analyze the standard recording contract prior to our signing and he said "Well, basically it's a long shot that you'll ever see any income from this unless you sell an incredible number of CDs." We said, "Okay, let's do it, this is art." At least the recording company was good at promotion and distribution around the world. About 16 years ago my wife and I were traveling in Switzerland

and I thought all the duo CDs were sold out, but we walked into a music store and found 5 different Estrem/Holmquist discs in a jazz bin next to the Duke Ellington CDs. My wife thought we should take a photo...that's about as much fame as I can handle. I find the artist's opportunity to realize income is mainly from selling discs after a performance or over the web.

Going Solo: Basement Tapes

During the 1990s I did many basement tapes at home with an 8-track cassette recorder. It was a kick to play around with multi-tracking, but there was no possibility of editing. Then in the late 90s came hard-disk digital recording. I decided to purchase a portable all-in-one 8-track digital recorder, rather than a system that interfaces with a personal computer. My first project was the most complex one I've attempted. It consisted of 20 Beatles songs multi-tracked, using just about every instrument in the house. I soon became obsessed with the black art of sound mixing. It's still astounding how producer George Martin at the peak of the Beatles masterpiece recordings had only 4 tracks to work with.

Recording, continued on p. 9



Recording, *continued from p. 8*

The element of silence when using microphones is as important for home recording as it is for studio or on-location recording. It would be impractical for me to soundproof a finished area of the basement and I don't think it would enhance the home value. My recording follows a seasonal pattern since it's not possible to record when the furnace or AC is running. Then I need to remember to turn off the ringer on the phone answering machine and make sure nobody is walking around upstairs or flushing a toilet when I record. Fortunately, we live in a secluded area, so outside noise is generally not a problem. A few years back I did a collaborative project with my brother, who's a singer. He was living in southern Iowa at the time so we mailed cassettes back and forth to each other as we wrote the songs over several months. I had recorded all of the instrumental tracks and he planned to drive up to my place so that I could record his vocals. We had only one day to complete the project. As we were finishing breakfast and getting ready to head for the dungeon we noticed two huge flatbed trucks pull in across the street with heavy earth-moving equipment on them. This was the day the neighbors had chosen to dig their new septic system. As it turned out, the noise didn't make it onto the recording and we discovered to our relief that the bunker is quite soundproof.

Gear Considerations

So what kind of gear does one need to get started? Lately, I've been focusing on solo recording with limited multi-tracking. I'm more concerned with the guitar as a complete solo instrument. This simplifies things quite a bit. For solo playing I'd recommend getting two high quality condenser mics. Subtle stringed instrument music seems best recorded by condenser rather than dynamic mics. One should keep in mind that top-end mics will also pick up a number of undesirable things like breathing, string squeaks, and bad tone. Stereo microphone placement is a matter of experimentation. There's no "one way" to do it. For acoustic and classic guitars I aim one mic at the neck and the other at the bridge. I record the archtop jazz guitar with one mic on the amplifier and the other close to the strings to give that "live" feel. The other necessary item is a good mic preamp. This boosts the microphone volume level up enough to get a good clean sound. That signal will go into the digital recording machine. My machine lets me adjust the sound (reverb, bass/treble, etc.) that I hear in the headphones. (Don't forget to include a good set of phones on the list.) For each of the 8 tracks on my recorder there are 8 virtual tracks. This means if you're recording on tracks 1 and 2 (with two mics) you're able to play the piece through 8 times and then edit to two other unused tracks. This is practically recording nirvana. I don't even have to mark the scores (sheet music)

anymore. I just go from one virtual track to the next and listen for the best version and edit when needed. It's also a good idea to invest in a good pair of studio monitor speakers. These become important when it is time to mix the tracks.

One of the greatest problems with hard disk recording that I've experienced is storage. There's only so much space on the hard disk and then you have to transfer material onto CDs. Since I purchased my machine at the turn of the century things have gotten more affordable and higher in quality, and have more storage capacity. I'm certain that my unit is probably close to obsolete as far as computer stuff goes, but it hasn't malfunctioned yet so I continue to use it.

Final Thoughts

There's always the question, "At what point should I record a piece of music?" My answer would most likely be, "A lot sooner than you think." You want to feel that you can get through a piece with some kind of finesse and come up with a credible interpretation prior to recording. The act of recording (and listening back) can accelerate those elements like nothing else. The performer can easily overlook many important items when preoccupied with playing a piece. I find myself making a number of changes after listening back. The recording becomes one of the best teachers available.

Since I'm recording non-commercially at this point I feel free to explore the many directions that the guitar has to offer. Some players are perfectionists and can't stand to listen to their recordings. I kind of enjoy being able to hear what I was working on in past years and sometimes it's the very thing for curing insomnia at 2 o'clock in the morning. Also, you will find if you take this route you'll never be caught without a little personal gift to give to someone.

About the author: During the summer months Daniel Estrem performs nightly on his porch in North Oaks. His most loyal audience is a herd of deer who prefer classical guitar, but tolerate the pop and jazz evenings. He practices dentistry in Little Canada.

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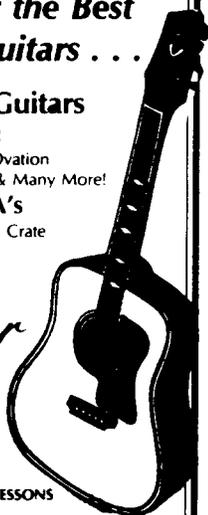
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