

# Guitarist

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JULY / AUGUST 2009

VOL. 25 NO. 4

## Announcing Our 2009-10 Concert Season



### MGS Brings the World of Guitar (and Lute) to Sundin Hall

Each year, the Minnesota Guitar Society (MGS) presents a monthly series of concerts from September through the following May. Concerts feature the finest classical guitarists in the world, as well as renowned artists in other styles and on other, related, stringed instruments. The line-up of performers for our next season has been confirmed and promises to offer our members and friends the chance to hear incredible music, in one of the finest recital halls in the entire region. Ticket prices remain unchanged. Season tickets are an especially good bargain, and help sustain our Society in a number of ways. Parking is free and convenient. And the music—did we mention that the music will be incredible? Contact us at 612 677 1151 or by email at <editor@mnguitar.org> and we'll send you a season brochure so you can order your tickets now! All concerts are at 8 pm. More info about the venue, Sundin Hall, can be found at <www.hamline.edu/hamline\_info/sundin>. Read on to learn more about all our performers.

*turn to page 3 for details*

**Also In This Issue:** News and Notes; Percussive Plucking by Chris Olson, Ben Verdery Guitar Camp by Mark Bussey

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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.

To reserve tickets for any Sundin Hall concert, please call our phone line at 612-677-1151 and leave a message.

### 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).

## Join the Minnesota Guitar Society!

As a member of the Minnesota Guitar Society, you receive ticket discounts on all MGS-sponsored events, a year's subscription to the *Guitarist* and the opportunity to place free classifieds in each issue.

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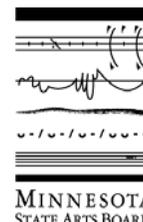
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Minnesota Guitar Society, P.O. Box 14986, Minneapolis, MN 55414

The Minnesota Guitar Society concert season is co-sponsored by Sundin Hall. This activity is made possible in part by a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, through an appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Matching funds have been provided by General Mills, AT&T, and Ameriprise Financial.



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE ARTS

# Sundin Concert Series

Sundin Concert Series, *continued from p. 1*

## **Peter Huttlinger, Fingerstyle Guitar**

**Fri. Sept 25**

Our Sundin Hall series kicks off with National Fingerstyle Championship winner Peter Huttlinger, who is one of today's finest fingerstyle guitarists. He has been featured twice on the cover of *Fingerstyle Guitar* magazine, has released seven CDs, and has created two top-selling series of instructional DVDs for Homespun Recordings.



## **Carlos Pérez—Classical Guitar**

**Fri. Oct. 30**

Born in Santiago, Chile, Carlos Pérez has given recitals in more than thirty countries and been awarded first prizes at major international guitar competitions in Venezuela, France, Belgium, Austria and Spain. He has issued five CDs. His first DVD was issued this year by Mel Bay. His arrangements and compositions have been published by Editions Henry Lemoine (France), Productions d'Oz (Canada), and Grenzland-Verlag Theo Hüsgen (Germany).



## **Lute Summit—Baroque and Renaissance Lute**

**Sat. Nov. 21**

Minnesota-based lutenists Paul Berget, Richard Griffith, Rockford Mjos, Phil Rukavina, and Thomas Walker, Jr. will collaborate on a unique, round-robin style concert featuring lute music in solo, duo, trio, quartet, and quintet arrangements.

**Paul Berget** received his B.F.A. degree from the University of Minnesota in 1972. After graduation, he continued his studies with the legendary Diana Poulton at the Royal College of Music in London, where he also studied with acclaimed lutenist Nigel North. In 1973, he appeared on Broadway in a musical production



Lutenists performing in the Lute Summit Nov. 21 are pictured clockwise from top: Richard Griffith, Rocky Mjos, Thomas Walker, Jr., Phillip Rukavina, and Paul Berget.

of *Cyrano* starring Christopher Plummer. In addition to playing Early Music, he has also performed in a variety of other musical styles: modern classical and steel string guitar, and world music. Recently he has been performing as the lutenist in the internationally acclaimed ensemble Minstrelsy!, a group that records on the Lyra Chord label. Other early music collaborations include the Rose Ensemble, Ensemble Polaris, the Minnesota Lute Quartet (MiLQ), and performances with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra.

Lutenist **Richard Griffith** became interested in the guitar at an early age, after seeing footage of Elvis Presley performing on the Ed Sullivan show, and began teaching himself to play guitar at the age of 10. He first discovered an affinity for Early Music as a student at the University of Minnesota in the 1980s, where his coursework included the history and art of Renaissance Europe. Griffith took up the lute in 2001, studying Renaissance lute and vihuela da mano with Twin Cities Early Music mainstays Paul Berget and Phillip Rukavina. Following the encouragement of Berget, who once told him "you must perform and perform often. If you wait to perform until you play as well as your heroes, you may never perform at all," Griffith has performed as part of the Schubert Club's Courtroom Concert Series, at the Minnesota Renaissance Festival, the Olde World Renaissance Faire, the Minnesota Scottish Ramble, and other Renaissance and Scottish festivals in

Sundin Concert Series *continued on p. 4*

## **Sundin Concert Series 2009-10**

Fri. Sept. 25

**Peter Huttlinger—Fingerstyle Guitar**

Fri. Oct. 30

**Carlos Pérez—Classical Guitar**

Sat. Nov. 21

**Lute Summit—Baroque and Renaissance Lute**, featuring Paul Berget, Richard Griffith, Rockford Mjos, Phil Rukavina, and Thomas Walker, Jr.

Sat. Dec. 12

**Goran Krivokapi'c—Classical Guitar**

Sun. Dec. 13, 3 pm

**Masterclass** @ MacPhail Center for Music

Sat. Jan. 23

**Third Annual Flamenco Guitarathon**

Sat. Feb. 20

**Andrew Zohn—Classical Guitar**

Sat. Mar. 27

**Soloduo—Classical Guitar duo**

Sun. March 28

**Masterclass**—Time/Location TBA

Sat. Apr. 17

**Salome Sandoval—Guitar, Baroque Guitar, and Voice**

Sat. May 29

**Annual Classical Guitarathon**

# Sundin Concert Series

Sundin Concert Series, *continued from p. 3*

Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa. He is active in promoting Early Music and the lute to new audiences and regularly performs in non-traditional venues such as coffee houses, shopping centers, and bookstores. He is a founding member of the Twin Cities Lute Cooperative and co-produced, hosted, and regularly performed at the monthly St. Paul Early Music casual concert series "Thursday at the Lute Cafe." Griffith has released several CDs of lute and other music. In addition to playing lute, Griffith has performed as a magician, mentalist, and guitarist, and on euphonium and trombone with local brass ensembles.

**Rockford (Rocky) Mjos** studied classical guitar with Dan Estrem and Paul Berget (who sent him home one day with a lute and a stack of tablature books). He performed with Concentus Musicus, Ex Machina, Lyra Baroque Orchestra, and in duet programs with Edward Martin. He then moved to the Netherlands and studied four years with Toyohiko Satoh at the Royal Conservatory. There he co-founded The Beggar's Banquet, a chamber ensemble that often created their own arrangements of Baroque popular music. The group was selected for the Young Early Music Network and invited to perform at the Dutch Embassy in London. Rocky has performed at early music festivals in San Antonio, Utrecht, and Wroclaw, Poland. In 2000 he moved back to the Twin Cities, and has since played with Glorious Revolution Baroque, Terzetti, and Rose Ensemble, and often accompanies his wife, Peggy Larson, or her choir The Earthtones. His interests range from early Scandinavian and Scottish music to contemporary music, and Toyohiko Satoh and Douglas Smith have dedicated modern lute compositions to him. Some of his music editions can be found at <[www.earlyguitar.ning.com/profile/RockyMjos](http://www.earlyguitar.ning.com/profile/RockyMjos)>. Rocky has also won numerous national awards for his graphic design work.

**Phillip Rukavina** has performed widely as a lute and vihuela soloist, an ensemble performer, and a continuo lutenist. He studied lute with Hopkinson Smith at the Academie Musical in Villecroze, France, and in Basel, Switzerland. He directed the Lute Society of America's summer program at the Amherst Early Music Festival in 2005 and 2007. He regularly teaches on the faculty of the Lute Society of America's Seminars at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, and directed the event in 2008. He has released two solo recordings on the Studio395 label, *Fiori Italiani* and *Ala Spagnola*. Phillip appears on *Sweet Division* (2003), and *Palestrina's Lute* (2007), two critically acclaimed CDs by the Venere Lute Quartet released by the Lute Society of America. Phillip has been a frequent guest instrumentalist with the Rose Ensemble and appears on their CD releases *Celebremos el Niño* (2006) and *Glory Shone Around* (2008). Phillip has performed with numerous instrumental ensembles, including the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Ars Antiqua of Chicago, and the New World Symphony.

**Thomas Walker, Jr.**, began classical guitar lessons at ten years old. He was captivated by the music of Leo Kottke some years later, and continued studies at MacPhail School of Music with Jack McNally. This led to an interest in jazz music as well as a renewed interest in classical music; in college, he studied music theory under Ona Pinsonneault (Normandale Community) and guitar with Glen Larson (Northwestern College-Roseville). He studied jazz independently by extensively transcribing the solo work of

Joe Pass. In college, Thomas became interested in Renaissance and Baroque music as well; this led by degrees to an interest in the lute some years later. He bought a lute in 1992 and started studies with Phillip Rukavina shortly thereafter. With Phil as mentor, he graduated from student to colleague and has since performed with Rockford Mjos and Paul Berget, as well as Phil, in various lute ensembles. Additionally, Thomas has performed solo and with the Rose Ensemble, Consortium Carissimi, Ensemble Polaris, members of the Lyra Baroque Orchestra, and many accomplished Baroque and Renaissance specialists in the Twin Cities. He released his first solo CD, *Toccata*, last year, as well as a second CD, *Due*, a collection of duets performed with Phillip Rukavina. A second CD of solos will be ready later in 2009. Thomas pays the bills as a consulting economist to small business, and lives in St. Paul with his wife and three children.



## **Goran Krivokapić, Classical Guitar Sat. Dec. 12**

Montenegrin guitarist Goran Krivokapić won his first international competition at the age of fifteen in Belgrade. He has gone on to win a

total of 18 first prizes, including the 2004 Guitar Foundation of America competition prize. In addition to his concert, Krivokapić will conduct a masterclass on Sun. Dec. 13 from 3 till 5 pm at MacPhail Center for Music in Minneapolis. The masterclass is cosponsored by MacPhail and more information about it can be found at their website.

## **Third Annual Flamenco Guitarathon Sat. Jan. 23, 2010**

Local flamenco guitarists gather for a wonderfully varied program of solo and ensemble performances. Previous "flamenco-athons" have been near-sell-out extravaganzas of great playing and lively audiences, and have featured locally based masters of flamenco as well as rising stars on the scene. This year's edition will be no different. Make sure you have a seat that night—by ordering season tickets today!

## **Andrew Zohn, Classical Guitar Sat. Feb. 20**



Guitarist/composer Andrew Zohn has been hailed as "one of the finest guitarists of his generation" by Anthony Morris, host of the nationally-syndicated radio program *Guitar Alive*. In addition to concertizing as a soloist throughout North America and in Europe, Zohn is active as a chamber musician and orchestral soloist and has released solo CDs on the Centaur and Clear Note labels.

## **Soloduo, Classical Guitar duo Sat. Mar. 27**

Matteo Mela and Lorenzo Micheli met

in the US, in the state of Texas, far from their native Italy, in autumn of 2000. A year later, they formed Soloduo, which has since performed throughout

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## OpenStage

OpenStage is a structured but informal way for guitarists of any level to experience the joy of playing for each other. It was started in 2002 at the suggestion, and with the leadership, of the late Dennis Burns, a long-time MGS member and avid amateur guitarist. If you've been at an OpenStage, you know what fun they are, and you might be wondering how you'll make it through the long summer without the opportunity to get together with other guitarists, swap stories about summer vacations, play a few tunes, and—enjoy some pizza! Never fear, our friends Jay and Jan Fillmore (along with help from a few of the other regulars) have offered to host an OpenStage Summer Party. Come join us on Sunday, July 19th to share music, food, and fun.

The event will feature the regular OpenStage format: a simple sign-up sheet, 3–15 minutes per person, and the opportunity to perform a second time after everyone has had a chance to play.

After everyone has played who wants to, we'll have pizza and soda while we swap stories, talk about the performances, and socialize. As always, listeners are welcome, so bring a friend.

To make sure we've got enough pizza for everyone, please RSVP to Jay Fillmore by Friday, July 17th (info above). He'll send you directions and parking instructions for the event once you RSVP. Hope we'll see you there!

For more information about OpenStage, contact Mark Bussey at <mailto:mhbussey@visi.com> or 612-822-5573.

### OpenStage Summer Party—Guitar & Pizza

Sunday, July 19th, 2 till 6 pm.  
At the Silver Lake Village Condos in  
St. Anthony Village.  
RSVP to Jay and Jan Fillmore at  
<jayfillmore@q.com> or  
612-788-1675

## Sundin Concert Series, *continued from p. 4*

Europe and North America to universal acclaim. Micheli's solo performance here during the 06–07 season was a triumph. We're glad to have him back!

The duo will conduct a masterclass on Sun. Mar. 28. Time and location TBA.



### Salome Sandoval, Guitar, Baroque Guitar, and Voice Sat. April 17

A classically trained singer who is at the same time a classical guitar self-accompanist, Salomé Sandoval is a unique and exciting artist. Sandoval has played and sung Early Music, Latin American music, and contemporary music in several ensembles and choirs in Venezuela and the US. This will be her Twin Cities debut.

### Classical Guitarathon Sat. May 29

A Classical Guitarathon was the first concert presented by the MGS and has been an annual tradition ever since. This season-ending celebration is always an exciting concert of established local artists and fresh faces performing well-known favorites from a wide range of repertoire.

## Board Members Busy!

**Brent Weaver** has launched Gringo Star Guitars, a business importing fine guitars (student level to concert artist level) from the guitaristically famous city of Paracho, Mexico. More about the venture can be found at their website, <www.gringostar.com>.

MGS Artistic Director **Joe Hagedorn** and the rest of the Minneapolis Guitar Quartet return to the Southern Theater in Minneapolis this summer for another exciting collaboration with flamenco dancer and choreographer Colette Illarde in a new production featuring music by the great Spanish composer Joaquin Rodrigo. Rounding out the program will be works by Maria Kalaniemi, Peter Maxwell Davies, and others. The program will be presented on Friday July 10th, Saturday the 11th, and Sunday the 12th. Last year's collaboration with Illarde was enjoyed by sold-out houses of lovers of great guitar and stunning dancing. Visit the Southern Theater website for more information—<www.southerntheater.org>. Order your tickets early for that one!

Jazz and classical guitarist and full-time McNally-Smith College of Music faculty member **Christopher Olson** is teaching this summer at The Shell Lake Arts Center in beautiful rural Wisconsin. The center is offering a \$100 rebate to guitarists for the Jazz Ensemble and Combo camp that runs the week of July 5. Chris will also be there for the Guitar Camp, August 2nd through 7th. Chris and his innovative jazz trio Framework have followed up a recent appearance on the public TV show *Almanac* with the release of a CD to rave reviews: Tom Surowicz wrote in the *Star Tribune* that "Framework's self-titled debut is easily one of the best hometown jazz albums of the year." The CD features Chris on guitar, Chris Bates on bass, and Jay Epstein on drums. To order a copy, visit <www.cdbaby.com/cd/frameworkmusic>. For more info, contact Chris at <knowtheneck@hotmail.com>

Fresh off their April performance at Carnegie Hall, the Tantalus Quartet (founded by MGS board member **Kristian Anderson**) gave a concert at this year's Guitar Foundation of America festival in Ithaca, NY. While there, Kristian will also adjudicated and gave lessons. Locally, this summer he'll be teaching guitar at MacPhail Center for Music.

**Todd Tipton** recently completed his Doctor of Musical Arts in guitar at the U of MN and is currently accepting new students of all levels in his studio. He describes his approach to teaching as "cross training" and when asked about this, he emailed us this reply:

"I'm not sure how to answer your question in brief. I do consider myself a *purist*, but I am not convinced that many understand exactly what that means. It is my conviction that placing classical music on a pedestal and ignoring other styles of music is not pure at all and is relatively a modern phenomenon. Throughout most of their history, I believe that classical musicians have been well-rounded in skills of spontaneity and improvisation. Players who are not capable of playing beyond the written page have a deficiency in their playing that was nearly nonexistent in the past. I believe that learning the classical guitar is more of a *process* of learning how to learn rather than merely learning classical guitar repertoire. Many great people who study other complex endeavors outside of music understand this concept.

"There are certainly those educators who teach other styles, but that isn't the same as the thing that I do. Those that have interests outside of the classical guitar repertoire have those interests

Board Members, *continued on p. 9*

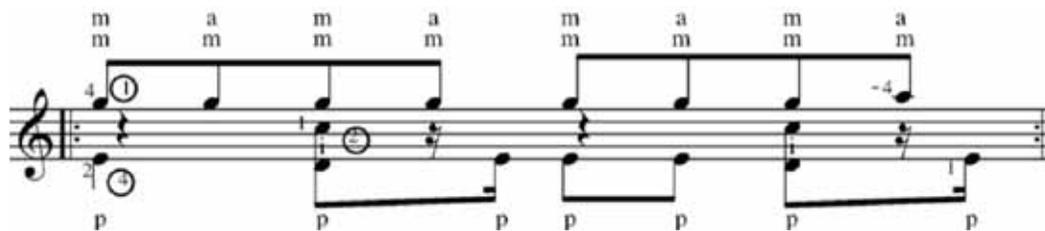
## Percussive Plucking

By Chris Olson

Previously, I wrote an article for this newsletter that demonstrated a guitar accompaniment pattern for a Bossa Nova. It wasn't necessarily what guitarists do in the Brazilian style, but was a realization of the roles normally taken by the bass and percussion (specifically, the clave). This sparked an interest in using outside sources to find fresh exercises and original music for the guitar. A drummer and friend of mine, Steve Zenz, wrote a book with hundreds of drum beats in every style. I thought it might be fun to try to represent certain grooves, using my fingers as the four appendages used by percussionists. To demonstrate this, I've chosen a typical rock pattern, shown here in standard, drumset notation:



By changing the clef to treble, and leaving the notes on the same lines and spaces, a playable pattern emerges. The bass drum is played with the thumb, while the snare drum, ride cymbal, and crash cymbal are played with the fingers. Because the hi-hat is notated below the bass drum (and because it is never struck at the same time in this particular pattern), the thumb can play that, as well. It may take time combining the "bass drum" and "snare," then the "bass drum" and "ride cymbal," then adding the "hi-hat," etc. But if you begin slowly, with a metronome, it's just like learning any classical or other fingerstyle piece:



Note that there are options for the picking hand, using either 3 fingers or 4. Try to work out a way to play it, then be consistent, hopefully training your *p*, *i*, *m*, and *a* to be more independent. Also, some drum notation guides put the ride cymbal on the top line of the staff (among other discrepancies). I referenced a guide that put the ride on the space above the staff, <[http://www.fivestardrumshops.com/files/FS\\_TT-Notation.pdf](http://www.fivestardrumshops.com/files/FS_TT-Notation.pdf)>, because it transferred to a better sounding pattern on the treble clef.

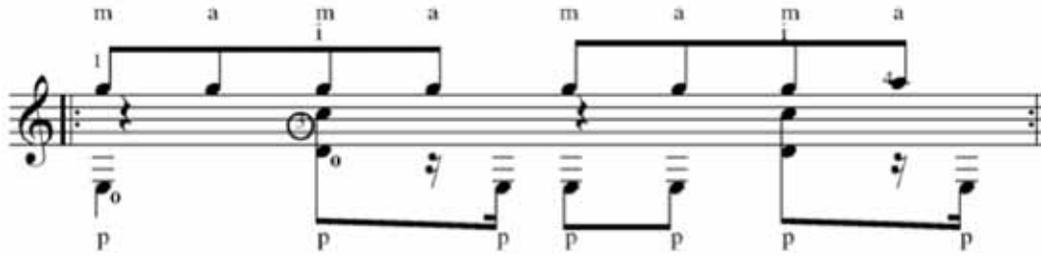
This pattern, like anything else on the guitar, can be played more than one way. The next example is played higher up the neck, and allows the open D to overlap the fretted E, for a more colorful sound:



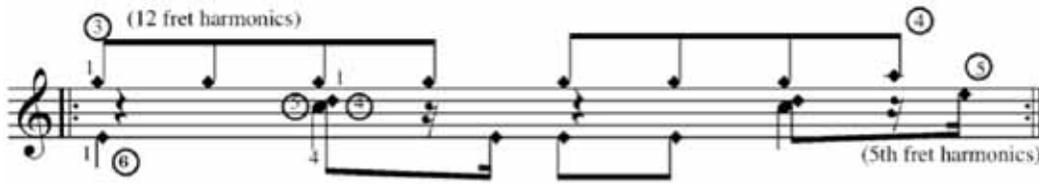
Masterclass *continued on p. 7*

# Masterclass

Because the open 6th string is also an E, we can take that note down an octave and find another easy way to perform the pattern, set in 3rd position, with a different challenge for the thumb, which skips between the 6th and 4th strings:



Except for the note that represents the snare, C, all the pitches in this example can easily be played with harmonics, although the example below is difficult to play without a cutaway on your guitar.



On the previous example, some liberties were taken with regard to what octave a note was originally written. But remember, THESE NOTES WERE NEVER PITCHES! They merely represented a drum sound. So why not take the rhythm and the picking pattern and transpose it. For instance, by using the pattern with the open D and leaving that D open, but moving the hand to a different fret, a new chord is produced:



Experiment with moving that pattern to any other fret. Sometimes the resulting chord is ordinary, sometimes colorful, and often times results in a dissonance reminiscent of many 20th and 21st century classical compositions.

Finally, we need not be limited to the original organization of notes, but simply use the rhythmic pattern and apply it to harmonies and melodies of our choice, as in the two examples below:



So when you're tired of those Giuliani arpeggios, consult a percussion text and learn the guitar version of a reggae, polka, or merengue. These patterns, along with a composition that was inspired by the drum pattern in this article, can be heard at [www.myspace.com/christophernolson](http://www.myspace.com/christophernolson). Hear ya' later.

MGS board member Chris Olson teaches at McNally Smith College in St. Paul and the Shell Lake Arts Center in Shell Lake, Wisconsin. [Ed. note: see the News and Notes page in this issue.] Chris also plays in the trio Framework, whose new CD is available at <http://cdbaby.com/cd/frameworkmusic>.

## Getting Ready for Class

by Mark Bussey

Summer is almost here, so what am I doing? I'm cramming for summer school! But it's not really that bad: I get to go to a week-long guitar class by disguising it as the family summer vacation—in Maui, Hawaii!

Classical guitar virtuoso and educator Ben Verdery has led this summer masterclass for guitarists in Maui for the past 11 years. I've been before, so I have a little idea of what to expect. The excitement of studying with Ben, though, is that you never totally know what to expect. The first time I took a class with him, his enthusiastic, nearly kinetic, teaching style took me by surprise and actually unnerved me. In the intervening time, I've come to appreciate his energy, focus, and passion for teaching, even if he does throw the occasional curve ball.

The class consists of six days of solo and ensemble lessons, with each participant having three solo lessons scheduled during the course of the week. Mornings are usually devoted to solo lessons, afternoons are a mix of solo lessons and ensemble rehearsals. Toward the end of the week, there are two public performances during which each student performs one of their chosen pieces, and everyone plays in a number of ensemble pieces that Ben has coached during the course of the week. To wrap everything up, there's a final morning de-briefing at which everyone gets a chance to talk through what they've learned and ask Ben the questions that they didn't quite get to in class. As a final send-off, there's an evening pot-luck bar-b-que that often features local specialties. Oh, and there's usually a fair number of late afternoon impromptu beach trips during the week.

For my part, preparing for class consists of selecting pieces for the three half-hour solo lessons I'll have. Ben asks that students submit proposed repertoire in February so that he can put together an interesting schedule that allows for some day-to-day variety in terms of repertoire and teaching topics. I'm always tempted to be overly ambitious in the pieces I select: my ego kicks in, and I want to come off as more polished and accomplished than I actually am in everyday life. But I know I'm better served by bringing pieces a little more within my comfort level. In fact, I've seen Ben give great lessons to beginning students just starting out with a piece. This year, my compromise is to bring one totally new piece that I just started a few weeks ago, and two pieces that I'm a little more comfortable with and have even had a chance to perform at OpenStage. [Ed. note: for more on OpenStage, see the News and Notes page of this issue and visit our website, <[www.mnguitar.org](http://www.mnguitar.org)>, and go to the OpenStage page.]

Each solo lesson usually begins with the student performing the work in its entirety for Ben plus the assembled class and spectators. Sometimes Ben will make a few quick observations to put the student more at ease, or have them perform some quick exercise and have the student play through the piece a second time. Other times he'll launch right into detailed technical or musical analysis of the work. Still other times, he'll digress into seemingly unrelated anecdotes that always turn out to place the

work in some larger context for the student to consider. I'm always amazed watching him, because each of these possible responses seems to be carefully gauged to meet the particular needs of the student and the particular demands of the piece.

During some lessons, a student might be suddenly accompanied by Ben playing an improvised guitar obligato, adding rhythm with a small egg shaker, or drumming on the nearest desk or chair. Sometimes a lesson will focus on the overall structure of a piece. Sometimes Ben will delve into a particular phrase, exposing how the student might explore the rest of the piece on their own. Still other lessons will focus on a particular technical aspect of a piece: tremolo, legato, slurs and ornamentation, etc. I suspect that some of the variety is simply caused by Ben's restless energy. The overall result is an incredibly dense week of information and performances.

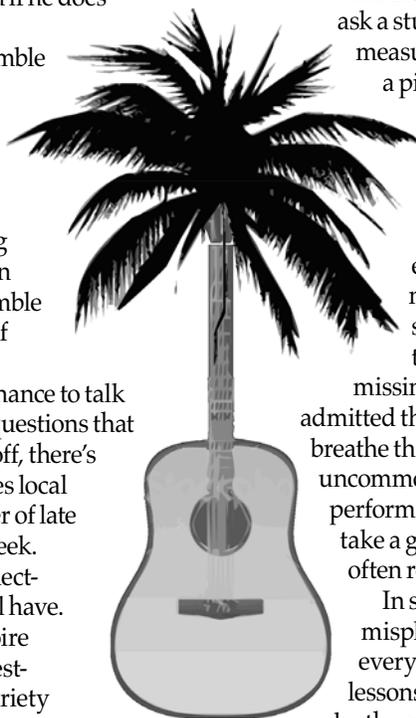
The most surprising "trick" I've seen Ben perform was to ask a student to breath into a spirometer (a lung capacity measurement tool consisting essentially of a tube with a ping-pong ball in it) after a particularly shaky performance. This exercise essentially forces you to take a few really deep breaths and relax your core muscles in the process. After doing this, the student was asked to perform the piece again.

The results were stunning. It sounded like a different person playing: the phrasing was dynamically nuanced and musical, the tempo was consistent and supported the phrasing, and the student seemed to be enjoying giving the performance: all things missing from the initial run-through. Afterward, Ben admitted that he'd noticed that the student had nearly failed to breathe throughout the entire first run of the piece—not an uncommon occurrence under the pressure of a masterclass performance. After witnessing this, I've always tried to take a good deep breath before playing; it never hurts, and often really helps.

In some ways, my own anxiety over how I'll play is misplaced. I usually learn as much or more watching everyone else's lessons. I get my share of nerves during lessons, and sometimes can't recall all of what's been said by the end of one. (After the example of a couple of other, smarter, students, I've started taking a digital recorder to tape my lessons so I can review them later when I'm more relaxed.) I actually find it really cool to be able to watch someone else having a lesson. I've gotten some great insights from being able to watch another student play repertoire I've played and studied myself. Often the lessons offer up insights or solutions that I'd never explored. Even when there's no flash of insight, it's good to realize that all guitarists—even the really accomplished ones—have their own struggles.

Other really fun and exciting components of Ben's class are the student performances and ensembles at the end of the week. Everyone receives ensemble parts via e-mail four to six weeks ahead of class to study (which we sometimes do). A part of every afternoon at class is set aside for rehearsing the ensemble pieces. It's amazing to watch Ben take a bunch of soloists (all at very different levels) and meld them into a fairly polished ensemble in the course of about five days. It's an even more amazing to be part of that ensemble.

Getting Ready for Class, *continued on p. 9*



## Board Members, *continued from p. 5*

integrated into the learning process with me at a level dictated by their needs and wants. Sometimes this directly happens on other instruments, sometimes only indirectly. I also believe that society's idea of a classical musician is a very modern phenomenon. I don't believe musicians were so uptight in the past, and they were better players for it. So, it isn't that I merely offer to teach in other styles; it is a bit more profound than that. I bring into question just what it means to be a classical guitarist; I question the entire process of learning. I do this, not because students may be interested in other styles, but because I feel it is important in order to make them better classical musicians.

"Students of mine who are interested in other genres are encouraged to pursue those interests. The cross-training develops those skills with little more effort via multi-tasking. To offer a few simple examples for a beginner: the basic thumb free stroke as I teach it is the basic, default hand position for finger free strokes, and also the basic position for beginning pick use on steel and electric guitars. The rest stroke also introduces basic right hand technique for the electric bass guitar. While many teachers have rigid beliefs concerning string-crossing, my students learn that string crossing can be a movement either from the elbow or the

shoulder. Both movements have particular costs and benefits tailored to the situation: I stress that rather than merely endorse one movement over the other. The same philosophy applies to the specific outward or inward tilt of the right arm, allowing for either a more open or closed position. Again, rather than pushing a rigid belief onto a student, I help the student to see that each position has costs and benefits, which allows the student a much richer understanding of the common ground in such diverse right hand techniques as heavy-metal palm muting, hybrid picking, lute plucking, and modern classical guitar technique! In addition, such versatility offers a far wider palette of tone colors. These are merely beginning examples and only for the right hand! The only term I am comfortable with that describes what I do with students and their outside interests, therefore, is 'cross-training.'

"The only thing I would emphasize is that this is only part of my teaching approach for some of my students. My overall teaching approach can be explained far more simply: I believe that everyone can learn to play with security and confidence and should spend most of their time learning repertoire they are excited about that is at an appropriate level for their development."

*For more information about Todd and his teaching style, contact him at <info@todddipton.com>.*

## Getting Ready for Class, *continued from p. 8*

The first time I participated in the class, the fear of playing in the ensemble almost kept me from attending. Playing with a bunch of other guitarists (who, in my head, all were much better performers than I was) terrified me. Thankfully, one of the other guitarists at the class took me under his wing and helped me make my way through the end-of-class performances. He taught me how to keep track of the beat and keep my place in the music. He encouraged me to play the parts I could, and not to sweat the ones I couldn't, since there were three or four other guitarists on each part. He'd play the key melody or rhythm so I'd know what to expect when the group played as a whole. He'd help me figure out where the entrances and cues were so I could mark them in my score. I was profoundly grateful for this generous friendship, it really defined the experience for me.

This is maybe the biggest reason I'm making my third trip back to the class. In addition to Ben's fantastic teaching, the seamless logistics and organization provided by his wife Rie, and the beautiful setting, it's a week spent with 10 to 15 other guitarists, all of them amazingly talented, generous, and passionate. The real lesson isn't just the one and a half hours you sit in a chair playing for Ben, it's the thirty-plus hours getting to watch Ben teach music, and the seven days of interacting with your fellow students. In that week I end up stockpiling enough music, inspiration, and ideas to fuel the rest of the year.

I hope I've sparked your interest! Full details about the summer masterclass can be found at Ben's website <www.benjamin-verdery.com>. Just click on the "Teacher" and "Masterclass" headings.

*MGS board member Mark Bussey is a classical guitarist who lives and plays in the Twin Cities. His day job involves a variety of technology and web-related projects.*

## Third Annual Youth Guitarathon A Great Success — *by Chris Becknell*

On Sunday, May 17th, twenty-seven excellent young guitarists participated in the most awesome Youth Guitarathon to date. Representing mostly the greater Twin Cities metro area and Saint Cloud, the performers, ages 8 to 18, gave a riveting two and a half hour concert of various styles at the University of Minnesota's Lloyd Ultan Recital Hall.

With the collaborative effort of multiple teachers, the University of Minnesota's guitar department, the Minnesota Guitar Society, and Gringo Star Guitars, over 35 young guitarists auditioned before a panel of judges on April 26th in Minneapolis and St Cloud. All the students were critiqued and given constructive suggestions on how to better their performances. Finalists were then chosen to perform in the Third Annual Youth Guitarathon.

A special thanks to everyone who auditioned and to the performers and teachers for bringing with them a supportive feeling of camaraderie that added to the love of all things guitar.

The performers were Pieter Von Steinbergs, Jon Opdahl, Peter Schik, Dani Dahlseid, Frank Fabbro, Austin Sankaran, Andrew Steichen, Julia Fabbro, Celia Tise, Abigail Murray Stark, Haluk Ercan-Fang, Keanon Hahn, Ryan Knutson, Andrew Steichen, Tobias Jansen, Austin Wahl, Xavier Jara, Matt Kalpin, Trevor Wiest, Liam Buell, Joe Olson, Christopher Garwood, Denis Terzic, Michael Rosenberg, Stephen Krishnan, Tom Polzine, and David Tramm.

Teachers represented were James Allen, Alan Johnston, Christopher Becknell, Kevin Carlson, Greg Giese, Tim Krueger, Jeff Lambert, Paul Storms, Gene Swanson, Brent Weaver, and Ben Woolman.

Plan now to join us in 2010 for the Fourth Annual Youth Guitarathon. Look for information in future newsletters, and online at our website, <www.mnguitar.org>!

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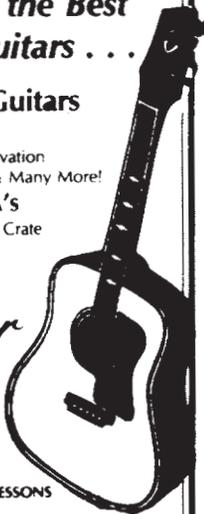
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Classified Ads, continued on p. 12

# Classified Ads

Classified Ads, *continued from p. 11*

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