



The Berkshire Guitar Society

www.berkshireguitar.freemove.co.uk



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October 9th - Early Music Workshop

BGS meeting 11th September

A good turnout of members came along to South Hill Park on 11th September to start off the new season with a members evening.

George Macdonald kicked off proceedings with discussion of some upcoming events and our current problems in arranging concerts (more of both later). When the playing started, it was Yvonne d'Souza who kicked things off with a performance of Villa Lobos' Prelude No 3 on her Yamaha "Silent Guitar". Whilst being inaudible to the rest of the world may in some circumstances be an advantage, it isn't on a BGS member's evening and Yvonne was very audible as in her hands the instrument produced a pleasing mellow tone through a portable amp.

Richard Butters followed this with an excellent rendition of the Prelude from Bach's Prelude Fugue and Allegro BWV 998 after recovering admirably from a false start no doubt brought about by the after effects of a days travelling.

George MacDonald then gave us "Canarios" followed by another BGS first, a piece of "Malian blues" (i.e. Blues from Mali - in west Africa, if you didn't know) which required the bottom string to be tuned up to G - I wasn't the only one to harbour concerns for the health of George's guitar, but it seemed to cope admirably and the result was very effective.

The next player to contribute was Cheryl Slater, who played the German Folk Song "Muss I Denn", the tune being better known as Elvis Pressley's "Wooden Heart", Cheryl followed this with an arrangement of Schumann's Humming Song.

From the heart of Europe we went to South America, Argentina to be exact, as I played one of the recently pub-

lished set of 4 "Piezas Cristalinas" by Maximo Pujol - a Milonga called "Pagina de Radio".

Back to Europe again as Alan du Feu played an arrangement of "Plaisir d'Amour", followed by a change of mode as Andy Scott played as a rumba for classical guitar called "Herencia Latina" which he had arranged in a flamenco style, and very effective it was too - I can quite understand Andy's flamenco providing an atmospheric background for those lucky diners at the various establishments in the Reading area where he appears.

We then had Steve Tucker giving an early taste of what is to come next month, with a Galliard by the Elizabethan composer Anthony Holborne, bearing the unlikely title of "Heigh Ho Holiday". Steve followed this with a Fantasia by Fransisco de Milano. This was notable for being written for the Lute in French tablature, where the frets on the instrument are denoted by letters rather than numbers. If anyone who (like me) is unfamiliar with this form of notation and thinks it would take some getting used to, then bear in mind that at least it is the "right way up" - unlike some early music tablatures which are "upside down". We may be hearing more of this in October

Gary Jordan then played the Gigue from Bach's 4th Lute suite (standard notation only!) and he was followed by John Parr who was enticed into playing part of "Malaguena", with Debbie Haeck and Steve Christmas coming next with a duet arrangement of Erik Satie's Gymnopedie No 1.

Not content with his earlier efforts, Andy Scott brought proceedings to a close with Villa Lobos' "Scottische Choro" played from memory - none of us ever doubted for a moment that you could still play a good classical piece, Andy.

News

COMING BGS MEETINGS

A reminder regarding meetings between now and Christmas.

The October meeting is on Sunday 9th and takes the form of a workshop on "Early Music" which Graham Cooper is kindly organising. This promises to introduce us to material very different from that which we usually play so for a change come along and join the fun.

Please note that in November we meet on the 6th i.e. the first Sunday of the month and not on our usual 2nd Sunday, as South Hill Park are holding an event that weekend. This meeting is scheduled as advance preparation for the Woodley Festival in March 2006.

The December meeting takes place on the 11th and will be the usual "Christmas meeting".

All of the above start at 7.30 pm in South Hill Park.

Don't forget that on November 27th, we will be staging our Student Concert, an opportunity for the new generation to gain playing experience in front of a friendly audience. More details to come next month.

CONCERTS

As mentioned earlier in this newsletter, we are having problems with arranging concerts due to lack of availability of suitable rooms at South Hill Park at times when we think we can make a success of a concert. Efforts are currently being made to arrange something for early in 2006 so watch this space.

CHARITY CONCERT (thanks to George for this review)

I have been to several memorable guitar concerts and in terms of musical enjoyment this one was up with the best of them; I can definitely confirm that biggest is not always best.

The concert was performed by Steve Christmas, Debbie Haeck and Ray Burley, who also produced most of the musical arrangements. The evening was organised in aid of the Cystic Fibrosis Trust 40th Anniversary and was held at St. Matthew's Church, Southcote Lane in Reading, which was an excellent venue because it offers good views of the performers, but most importantly because the acoustics were nigh on perfect - so bright that even the softest of notes were clearly audible, and yet there was no annoying reverberation, which can be a problem in larger churches.

The programme started with the trio playing 3 Spanish Pieces by Albeniz (Capricho Catalan, Tango and Mallorca). These worked exceptionally well and showed the audience that the three performers were going to play very tightly together and play with great sensitivity. Next Steve and Debbie played Largo and Rondo Op 34 No 2 by Carulli, probably best known from the Williams and Bream Together recording. They performed this very well and the audience were clearly delighted.

After this Ray Burley re-joined the group to play his arrangements of Robert Schumann's Kinderscenen, 13 short pieces based on Schumann's own adult reminiscences of childhood. I really liked these, and was amazed how well so many different styles and moods could hold together so coherently. To my ear, not knowing the piano originals, they were extremely well arranged and the performers must have really enjoyed playing them; in lesser hands some of these pieces could have quickly deteriorated in to

aimless musical ramblings but the trio were well aware of the different nuances and changes of phrasing and held it together wonderfully - I was totally absorbed throughout this section, in fact I was totally absorbed throughout the whole evening.

After the break Steve and Debbie performed 5 Spanish Dances by Granados. They had performed at least some of these pieces before at the BGS Spanish Circle Evening earlier in the year, and it came as no surprise that they performed these beautifully. A particular favourite of mine is the Oriental: Andante. I first heard this on a Gerald Garcia CD and I have loved it ever since, and Steve and Debbie play this really well. When my time finally comes to leave this world I would live somebody to play me out to this - absolutely gorgeous and captivating (I won't temp fate by asking Steve and Debbie to do the honours!).

The final section was a Suite from West Side Story by Leonard Bernstein, which encompasses a whole range of moods. The suite really summed up the evening for me: firstly there was the staggering togetherness of the trio, for me this was best exemplified by the humorous Gee, Officer Krupke with its strong rhythms and unexpected turns of phrase; secondly there was the excellent musical arrangements of Ray Burley adapted (here) for three guitars and faithfully capturing the moods of the original orchestration; and thirdly, there was the beautifully sweet, but never syrupy, sound of 3 excellent guitars played with tremendous sensitivity by Steve, Debbie and Ray.

Well done to Steve and Debbie for raising a tremendous sum of money for charity and may you continue to delight audiences as you definitely did on this evening.

George