

CHRISTCHURCH GUITAR SOCIETY

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In limbo

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CALENDER OF EVENTS For the rest of 2007:**Monthly Sunday meetings:**

1st Sunday of each month

7.30pm, Linwood Community Arts' Centre, corner Worcester Street and Stanmore Road
Free for members, \$5 non- members. Non- members are always welcome.

4 November.....Flamenco Flamenco music, flamenco influenced music, music with a very tenuous connection to flamenco – or something else entirely!

11 November.....Junior Concert, Sunday 2pm, Linwood Community Arts Centre

2 December.....Christmas

Report on meeting on 7 October 2007: Italian theme

Present: Gillian Calvert, George Hendry, Wolfgang Zdenko, Bill Wilson, Nigel Scott, Mike Tottman, Kenny Daly, Julie Scales, David Smith

David, Julie, Kenny, Gillian: Allegro from Concerto in D major by Vivaldi (arrangement for 3 guitars by David Smith)

Evan: Koyunbaba by Carlo Domeniconi (Selections)

Kenny: Allegro by Guilani; Etude in A minor by Carcassi

Julie and David: Polanaise concertante by Guilani

Julie: Dance norde no. 4 by Guilani

Bill: Wild mountain thyme, Scottish trad. Arranged by Scott Tennant; Torija by Torroba; Andante maestoso Op. 11 no. 6 by Sor

Mike: Minuet Op. 21 no. 12 by Carcassi

David: 6 pieces selected from 36 Caprices in all keys by Luigi Legnani

Julie: Capricchio Arabe by Tarrega

JULIAN BYZANTINE — Guitar.

The Chapel, Christchurch Centre of Music — September 15th 2007
Review by David Smith (16/09/07)

A moderate sized audience was treated to guitar playing of a high professional standard with a display of musicianship second to none. From the opening movements from Bach's 2nd *Lute Suite* a clearly defined and mature musical mind was in evidence. What came through immediately was a strong sense of style, clarity and balance of voicing with well articulated dialogue between the contrapuntal elements. After the Prelude and a beautifully sustained Sarabande the Gigue and Double revealed a performer very much in form and at the top of his game. With a strong sense of rhythm and well focussed tonal articulations Byzantine's immaculate phrasing was well established and never in doubt.

These elements were continued into the set of variations on Handel's *Harmonious Blacksmith* by Giuliani. This work contained parts transcribed from the original linked to the composer's own invention together creating a work with a marvellous set of contrasting musical textures. Clarity of thinking and expression was once again the hallmarks of Byzantine's performance. This piece also provided a subtle link between the Baroque items and the neo-Romantic *Theme varie et Finale* by the Mexican Manuel Ponce. This work, dating from the 1920's, had at times a jazz-like feel with many altered chords and chromaticism. By the close of the Finale the scene was set for the remaining Spanish and South American items on the programme.

The two famous works by Rodrigo (*En los trigales* and *Fandango*) brought the first half to a spectacular conclusion. The first work was superbly played with exquisite rhythmic control and while the second work had moments of uncertainty there remained overall a display of technical and musical virtuosity.

Opening the second half were two familiar works by the Argentine tango maestro Astor Piazzolla. Byzantine's arrangement of *Verano Porteno* is complex and full of interplay between the many ideas while *La Muerte del Angel* is more straight forward but without any loss of intensity. Between these and the set of Albeniz pieces was the familiar *Sonatina* by F.M.Torroba. This work is full of cheerful melodies and toe tapping rhythms with a very beautiful middle movement. Surrounded by the other more adventurous Spanish composers the work comes across as rather conservative albeit with a pleasant excursion into the more gentle aspects of Spanish music.

The impressionistic and programmatic works by the great Spanish pianist Isaac Albeniz re-awakened the Spain of Rodrigo and were superbly arranged and delivered by the performer. *Rumores de la Caleta* rippled along with cascading variations and a vitality that made one forget that these were originally piano pieces. The substantial *Torre Bermeja* inspired by the vermilion tower in the Alhambra concluded the programmed items and provided a fitting climax. The *Carnavalito* from Jose Merlin's *Suite del Recuerdo* was a suitable encore and allowed the performer and audience to return to a normal state of consciousness after the demands of this high quality programme.

Since his first visit here in 1990 Julian Byzantine has delivered a vast range of high quality music delivered with professionalism and passion. This performance will be remembered and treasured as one of the best.

Masterclass by Julian Byzantine, Friday 14/9/07
Report by Gillian Calvert

The first masterclass of Julian's visit was held at Evan Begg's house – thanks for the hospitality Evan!

Julie started off with Evocation by Merlin. Here Julian noted a need for more sustained musical lines, not cutting off notes or anticipating chords and barres. Fingering is a chess game: the hand must be set correctly and fingers put down sequentially as needed. He suggested cross finger exercises where the player holds fingers in the air, lifts them into position and drops them onto the string. It is also important to keep the right hand angled so the thumb and first finger do not interfere. Julie also played Carnevalita also by Merlin and here Julian mentioned economical hand movements, planting fingers on the strings in fast arpeggios and keeping the right hand motionless.

For Gillian playing an anonymous 16th century Pavane, Julian pointed out some important issues of posture (left shin on guitar stool should be perpendicular to the floor and the guitar held more upright) and relaxation, such as breathing and relaxing the shoulders. There needs to be more connection between notes, so not just hitting a note and moving directly on. Gillian then played Waltz in G by Daniel Fortea. Here Julian mentioned keeping the thumb behind the fingerboard in a natural supportive position for the fingers. It is important to play slowly, get it right the first time and consciously correct mistakes as you play rather than having second attempts at hard passages.

Kenny's piece was a Pavane by Gaspar Sanz. Kenny needs to work on developing the musicality of his playing by not basing his phrasing around the way it feels to play the notes. It is easy to bring out a resonant chord but this must only happen for musical reasons, and generally a suspension should be played louder than the resolving chord. A phrase needs to be brought to a close with a diminuendo and pulling back the tempo. Listening to your own playing is important in bringing together your intentions in playing and what is actually happening. Julian also mentioned some technical points such as opening out fingers 2 and 3 which automatically positions 3 and 4. Cross string exercises are useful to isolate finger movements. Keep the hand in to the fingerboard. During practice always be alert and conscious of your actions. Don't rely on muscle memory – otherwise you can become aware of what you are doing at the wrong moment which is extremely distracting.

Mike worked on Opus 35 by Sor. Julian pointed out some similar errors to Gillian: keep shin perpendicular to the floor, breathe, play slowly, anticipate the next note and get it right first time. Don't favour finger 1, but reposition hand to allow all fingers to be on their tips with good curvature. Keep the hand right up against the fingerboard. Move the elbow out to allow an open hand for a big stretch. The fingers should float above the surface of the strings. Mike also played Study no. 2 by Tarrega. Here Julian brought out the need to really analyse what is going wrong when you make a mistake and not just re-practise all your old errors.

I found this masterclass to be most valuable – as I have found all I have attended. Just hearing over and over again the same old problems has made me determined to correct at least one! Thank you Julian for kindly pointing us toward better guitar playing!

Masterclass by Julian Byzantine, Sunday 16/9/07
Report by Evan Begg

This was the second “Masterclass” of Julian’s visit, and like the first was informative for players and observers. There were 5 performers, including 4 of our younger guitarists, who impressed with their ability and keenness.

George Hendry, the single ‘oldie’ on display, kicked off with the familiar Romance, composed by the ubiquitous Anon. Julian felt that George’s left hand was “not bad”, but that the right hand needed work. An organised approach to practice was the key. The right hand needs to establish a strong rhythmic grounding. A regular pulse, with the same weighting of sound, and deliberate accenting is necessary. Scales should be practised with constant tone and strength of attack. For both free and rest stroke there should be a definite pluck and follow through. The pluck should be down, through and release, not up.

Daniel Bunyasakdi followed, with Bach’s Bourree. A good steady rhythm was noted, and the major area needing attention was the left hand. The position of the left hand is all important. The thumb needs to be centralised in opposition to the fingers, as it would be if picking up and object. The thumb should move up the fingerboard maintaining the same relationship with the fingers. The wrist position should be very stable, and close to the fingerboard so that stretching is minimised. The same part of the finger tip should be used, unless there is a specific reason.

Jun Santipongchai played Northern Dance by Giuliani. Despite only learning for a few months, he played with good pace and spirit. However there was quite a lot of tension involved, with too much finger pressure. More care is needed with left hand finger placement. Spacing between fingers should match the spacing between frets. Practice should be slow and deliberate, using a metronome. The ability to stop and restart anywhere within a piece should be cultivated. Most important, listen to the music.

Vijay Mowbray played Allegretto, by Carulli. While the performance was reasonably convincing, many of the problems of the right and left hands were present. The crucial positioning of the left hand (see Daniel above) should be practised in front of the mirror. With regard to the right hand, Julian emphasised the need to pluck THROUGH the string (see George above). The position of the right hand should vary, for different tonal expression.

Megan Strickett played Evocation (seemingly the piece of the moment!) by Merlin. It was a pleasing overall performance, and there was no single area deficiency. This said, some fine tuning could occur for most areas! Sitting position – back straight, and shoulders down. Look at fingers from behind the fingerboard. The left hand could be centralised more with respect to the fingerboard, and the thumb relaxed (a stabiliser, not a vice!). Practice of the right hand would benefit as for George, above. Scales should be practised with 3 or 4 free strokes alternating with 3 or 4 rest strokes, concentrating on constant tone and volume.

Please Send Correspondance to: The Newsletter Editor, Christchurch Guitar Society, 65C Rugby St, Christchurch 8014

Subscriptions for 2007:

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Christchurch 8061

It is often hard to get people to pay their subs. It would be appreciated if people would take an active role in this, rather than waiting to be reminded many times.

Website: (www.christchurchguitar.org.nz)

Please contact Mike Tottman mtottman@hotmail.com if you have anything you wish to put on the website. Phone:

You will note that we still have not got a President for 2007. If anyone can think of a solution to this, please let us know.