

LETTER FROM NEW YORK

By JULIA CROWE

ONE LUCKY audience at Carnegie's Weill Hall enjoyed the recent New York debut of Hungarian guitarist and composer, Dávid Pavlovits, who teaches on faculty at the University of Szeged and is also the founder and director of the Szeged International Guitar Festival. Opening his programme with a decisive bow, he performed his own arrangement of J.S. Bach's *Sonata in G minor BWV 1001* with an impressively controlled and careful technique, all while imbuing every note with a distinctively pianistic musicality. Then he did what all fine musicians do, which is utterly seduce and distract you from the technique with the beauty of sound and imagery of music, to the point where a set of hands on a fret board fades away and morphs into underwater sea creatures gamboling across an ocean floor.

He performed similarly accomplished arrangements of Mozart's *Fantasy in D minor*, Manuel de Falla's *The Miller's Dance* interspersed with his own compositions, *Fingerprints (Hungarian Sketches)*; a humorous *Tarantella*; *Three Relics*, inspired by Aztec ruins, and *Amethysts*. The latter features eleven short pieces with distinctive voices with memorable and melodic lines. He closed his programme with the impressively difficult *Sonata* by Ginastera and returned to a storm of applause to offer two encores on the piano: Alexander Scriabin's *Prelude in A minor* followed by *Scarlatti's Sonata E flat major*. While his technical command and artistry were apparent, they were not the main focus. His performance reminded everyone of the full depth and dimension of the guitar's chameleon-like palette, and his obvious versatility on the piano was an unexpected lagniappe.

Earlier in the week Pavlovits had given a guest lecture at the Manhattan School of Music to discuss how he finds inspiration for his compositions in piano music. He also demonstrated his technique for discerning melodic voicings on piano and applying them to the guitar for better expression, thereby helping to prevent habitual fingerings from lapsing into familiar patterns.

Another joyous performance in New York was Patty Larkin's all-women *La Guitara* tour at Merkin Hall, featuring Muriel Anderson, Kaki King, Patty Larkin and Mimi Fox. Folk rock/acoustic guitarist Patty Larkin had remarked onstage at the last New York Guitar Marathon that she couldn't help noticing she was but one of two women guitarists performing. Posed with the constant question of 'Where are all the good women guitarists?' she became inspired to put together a CD and concert tour featuring a roster of talented performers from all playing styles and genres, including: Sharon Isbin, Muriel Anderson, Badi Assad, jazz-classical gui-



La Guitara: Mimi Fox, Patty Larkin, Muriel Anderson, Vicki Genfan

tarist Vicki Genfan, jazz guitarists Mimi Fox and Alex Houghton, blues guitarist Rory Block, pipa-player Wu Man, slide guitarist Ellen McIlwaine (who performed with Jimi Hendrix), rock guitarist Jennifer Batten and Kaki King. The *La Guitara* CD also includes recordings of the late blues great Memphis Minnie and ragtime picker Elizabeth Cotten.

The Merkin Hall concert opened with Anderson, King, Larkin and Fox performing Larkin's mesmerizing *Bound Brook*. Among the highlights of the evening were jazz guitarist Mimi Fox's dazzling medley of Gershwin's *Someone to Watch Over Me* and *Skylark*, which she dedicated on stage to her sister. Muriel Anderson joined her on harp guitar with a



Dávid Pavlovits.

spry duet of a samba-fied *Angel Eyes*. Anderson proved to be a crowd-pleasing entertainer with her opening flash of flamenco, an excellent rendition of *Sakura* and country banjo imitation, ending with a slapstick *One Minute Chopin Waltz* which included an errant housefly and a daring play with her chin in first position! Larkin is an adroit guitarist and songwriter in the witty vein of Richard Thompson, with her Celtic-inspired tunes. King might be forgiven for her press notes - which state rather pointedly that she began her studies on guitar with classical lessons but dropped them after finding them 'boring' - once you recognize her forté lies in regarding the guitar as a six-stringed drum and by mocking audience members who have forgotten to turn off their mobile phones. It was pleasing to see many young girls in the audience.