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LETTER FROM NEW YORK

By JULIA CROWE

THE MANHATTAN School of Music recently held its Guitar Discovery Festival with three evenings of packed concerts by the guitar faculty, free and open to the public. Guitarist Oren Fader opened with a programme of new and modern works of music. Standouts of the evening included his rendition of Elliott Carter's *Changes* and Dusan Bogdanovic's *Six Balkan Miniatures for World Peace*. Also, Israeli composer Gal Ziv proved himself a talent with Fader's World Premiere performance of his piece *Lights over a Northern Valley*, with its meditative spirit and landscape of evocative string bends. Pedro Da Silva's *Rhapsodie sur un Theme d'Olivier Messiaen* had set the audience to the edge of their seats with delight at its high-spirited speed. For the second half of the programme, Fader performed *Monophony* by John Mayrose on electric guitar with an ensemble of alto saxophone, electric piano and electric bass followed by Lois Vierk's *Io* with electric guitar, flute and marimba and Louis Andriessen's *Hout*, again with electric guitar and a small ensemble of tenor saxophone, piano and marimba.

New York Guitar Festival impresario David Spelman told me during intermission how pleased he is to be working on the first-ever, two-week long Adelaide International Guitar Festival in Australia, which is expected to attract a worldwide audience to the Adelaide Festival Centre in November 2007. The event will feature performances of emerging Australian talent along with international artists from a variety of playing genres, including rock, classical, flamenco, blues, jazz and experimental music.

Spanish guitarist Jose Manuel Dapena also attended this concert. He was in town to perform his Joaquín Turina transcriptions at the Instituto Cervantes before heading along to Chicago for another concert at the Church of Evanston in Evanston, Illinois as part of his world tour. Dapena was a student of David Russell and his recent CD release *Rincón Mágico* is available exclusively as a download through his website: <http://www.manueldapena.com>.

For the second evening of the Guitar Discovery Festival, David Leisner performed an all-Matiegka programme, including his *Sonata in B minor, op. 31, no.6; Andante con espressione* from *Grand Sonata No. 2, Variations on a Tyrolean Song, op. 27; Grand Sonata No. 1* and *Three Minutes, op. 15, no.1, op. 20, no. 10 and op. 15, no. 4*. Leisner amused the audience with his recount of how the Czechoslovakian composer Wenzeslaus Matiegka's musician parents had discouraged him from becoming a musician and urged him to study law instead. Matiegka graduated from the University of Prague's law



Mariano Aguirre and soprano Lauri Shemaria.

school and wound up moved to Vienna in 1800, making music his career after all. He played piano, organ and guitar, violin and voice and worked as a choral conductor up until his death from tuberculosis at in 1830 at 57 years old, leaving behind a wife and six children. Because of his reserved personality, Matiegka's work never received the full attention his work has deserved. Leisner will be recording a CD of Matiegka's music on the Azica label for release next year.

Manhattan School of Music's Guitar Department Co-Chair Mark Delpriora closed the guitar festival with his programme of music from the Andrés Segovia Archives, a collection of recently discovered works written for Segovia, published by Berben Edizioni Musicali and edited by Angelo Gilardino. Delpriora mentioned that the works existed in Segovia's private collection and were not made public until fifteen years after his death. This particular evening concert, included *Sardana Chigiana, Canción De Leonardo* and *Catalanesca* by Gaspar Cassadó; *Prelude* by Aloys Fornerod; a jazzy *Spiritual* by Pierre-Octave Ferroud (which Delpriora admitted Segovia never would have played); *Sonatina* by Cyril Scott; *Quatre Pièces, op. 32* by Henri Martelli; *Sonata-fantasia* by

Federico Moreno-Torroba and *Piezas Liricas* by Vincent Arregui. Delpriora closed with a rousing Corbetta *Chaconne* performed on his new Baroque guitar.

At this concert, I also ran into Paul Herzman, the former classical music manager of New York City's Virgin Megastores and now-defunct Tower Records. 'It's refreshing to see how much unemployment improves one's daily practice,' he says. 'I'm finding I can actually play some of these pieces.' He also shared the tip of checking out www.youtube.com to catch the video of 'a young man seated at the edge of his bed playing the most fantastic rendition of the theme song to the animated television programme, *The Simpsons*, on a blue guitar.' (In the search bar, type in 'Simpsons Unplugged.') Herzmann also urges checking out the phenomenal left hand technique of Chinese guitarist Li Jie.

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=GlXlaOeYI2c>.

In the same vein of guitar-related internet curiosities, I'd recently caught an eBay auction posting by New Jersey-based seller, 'burbank 74,' offering two of Alice Artzt's stage dresses from her personal collection. One dress, listed for £25.00, was made of dark blue velvet made by a professional tailor in the renaissance style with a full skirt and lined bodice, long sleeves, a bateau neckline and a belt with a rhinestone buckle. The other dress, listed £50.00, is made of 'thick soft aqua blue French brocade...suitable for outdoor performances, or for wearing in cold castles in the winter' and it was made especially for Ms. Artzt, who wore it for performances during her world tour in the early 1970s. This is the same dress she is wearing on the cover of her second record album. (A copy of this album was offered with the dress.) Both gowns offer a clever 'large hidden pocket to secretly hold valuables or a wallet.' The first round of auctions did not result in any bids so there is a chance these items may be relisted. One gem of advice Artzt had passed along at one point for this column was that the best listening exercise any classical guitarist can do is to listen to classical music unrelated to the guitar.

I was pleased to catch a concert by guitarist Mariano Aguirre and soprano Lauri Shemaria as the Duo Cantabile at the Queen of All Saints in Brooklyn. This duo has performed at Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and both are recently married graduates of Mannes who serve on faculty at the Brooklyn Music School. Their programme featured works of Dowland, Giuliani, Weiss, Purcell, Mozart, Lauro, De Falla and Copland. Acoustically, had their work cut out for them with the church's cavernous vaulted stone ceiling and slightly swimmy sound, which Aguirre attempted to manage for the guitar with an AER Acousticube amp and mic.

In any case, this duo shines as a picture-perfect example of the emotional power that can be

won by performing with restraint and control. Ms. Shemaria's singing conveyed expressiveness with a well-modulated technique that allowed her voice to unfurl into a full palette of colour in beautiful interplay with Aguirre's equally sensitive guitar playing. The outstanding moments of their programming came with Mauro Giuliani's *Four Ariette, Op. 95*, Henry Purcell's *Dido's Lament* and their encore of *Ave Maria*. They will be performing December 3rd at the Good Shepherd Fall Concert Series and in recital December 20th at the Templo del Carmen in Toluca, Mexico. Next year they will be featured guest artists at the New York Guitar Seminar's concert series, 'Ensembles of the World.'

Andy Summers, who writes for these pages on occasion, was recently in town for an intense schedule of interviews and book signings at the Barnes & Noble in Chelsea to celebrate the release of his smart, funny memoir *One Train Later* (St. Martin's). In the book, he recounts his adventures of what it was like to be a band member of The Police, along with his earliest beginnings on an old Spanish guitar and his later studies of classical guitar at Cal State Northridge. Sting also held a signing the same evening as Summers' book signing at a store further uptown to promote his new album of John Dowland's music. Wisely, neither of these artists chose the route of John Mayer, who thought it would be funny to promote his new album by posting cheap flyers that read in all caps, 'Jonn Mayer will teach you guitar! (modeled after the eminently plastered-about-town, DAN SMITH WILL TEACH YOU GUITAR! posters.) *New York* magazine reported that a phone call to the tabbed phone numbers did result in a recording of Mayer thanking the caller for their interest in guitar lessons. However, no actual lessons would be given. The magazine reported that voice mail to his management's office appeared to be full. I wonder why.

After the Summers' signing, we caught a quick drink afterward with *Rolling Stone* photo editor Jodi Peckman and former Squeeze manager Larry Impey, whose early photographs of The Police are included in the book. Impey showed me a fabulous shot he'd taken of Blondie during one of her first tours to the U.K. and this reminded me all too miserably of this week's closing of the rock club CBGB's, the city's one indulgent haven for all new and experimental music. A year ago, I'd had the chance to enjoy the club's dim and cavernous environs to catch Györgi Ligeti's son Lukas perform a set of avant-weird jazz with red-faced tuba player, all the while the ceiling's spitball stalactites shook from the strains of the band from upstairs thumping a few extra notes in overhead. Summers writes about the band's first performance at CBGB's in the book as well and it's a fitting tribute to the memory of an iconic place that contributed its part to New York music history.