

LETTER FROM NEW YORK

By JULIA CROWE

PEPE ROMERO held one of the more successful masterclasses seen in New York in a long time, his first-ever class conducted in the city. With each highly-skilled performer, Mr. Romero immediately pinpointed issues and articulated solutions with eloquent example and adequate demonstration in such a way that it helped elevate each student's playing with dramatic clarity. His ability to draw out each student's gift of playing reminded me of once



Pepe Romero.

patiently fish out a shiny coin from the bottom of a street grate with a long string and a stick of gum. And by handing this proverbial coin back to each student, the audience in attendance was that much richer for the experience as well.

Presented by guitar department co-chair Mark Delpriora at the Manhattan School of Music for their Masters at Manhattan program, the class was open to the public with free admission at the newly renovated Greenfield Hall, in association with the recent The New York Guitar Festival. Ten minutes before doors opened, the elegant little foyer outside Greenfield Hall was crushingly packed with attendees.

The first student, Rupert Boyd, performed Augustin Barrios Mangoré's *Vals. op. 8, no. 3* with good command of the stage. Mr. Romero reviewed a handful of musical phrases where the emotional component could be better drawn while addressing his dynamic control with the advice to not think of dynamics in terms of hitting the strings harder but to instead visualize oneself as expanding physically into a larger or smaller entity. The technique seemed to work.

After student Nadav Lev performed *Sonata Mexicana* by Manuel Ponce, Mr. Romero advised him to first make eye contact, greet the audience before acknowledging them and beginning a performance.

'When you greet the audience by looking around, you are acknowledging that magic may happen,' Romero said. 'And when you begin a piece, you enter a space inside the music first. Always in life the performer has nerves knocking at

his door. It is a good thing to have nerves because how do we conquer fear? With love.'

Observing tension in Lev's right and left hands, running along both pinkies, Mr. Romero recommended that he practice arpeggio exercises and scales while keeping the hand soft in order to prevent injury from occurring at some point down the road.

Student Soichi Muraji performed Johann Sebastian Bach's *Partita No. 3 for violin, BWV 1006* on his 1959

Hauser with a bit of shy reserve, which prompted Mr. Romero to feel music emanating from the chest, 'which is where music breathes.' When Muraji nailed this visualization technique at the first try, Mr. Romero asked if he happened to have another piece prepared. Muraji performed *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* by Tárrega and Mr. Romero suggested trying the finger combinations of *p-m-i* for the ornamentation sections of the piece and then *a-m-i-p* for the tremolo so that everything ended on the thumb.

The last student, Pablo Sainz-Villegas, performed the first movement from Joaquín Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*. Mr. Romero advised him on the rhythmical aspects of the piece's strumming sections and suggested using his index finger in one sweep, followed by the index and middle fingers grouped on the downward strum to open up the sound. Pepe also pronounced Sainz-Villegas' first run-through of

ornamentation to be 'weempy' and asked him to repeat it. The second attempt met with enthusiastic audience response. Mr. Romero explained that the *Aranjuez* is actually a Bulerías, from a flamenco standpoint.

In the closing audience Q&A session, Mr. Romero was asked what he has found to be the most valuable advice imparted to him by his own father.

'It is to play each note with clarity and with love. When we play, each note leaves us and echoes, spiraling outward and onward into infinity like a radio wave. So you want to be sure to play well and with love.'



Steve Aron.