

LETTER FROM NEW YORK

By JULIA CROWE

WHEN THE Manhattan School of Music (MSM) began planning for its year-round celebration of the school's 90th anniversary, 'Made in Manhattan,' the school decided to include concerts centering around music composed in New York, including an evening devoted exclusively to chamber music for the guitar.

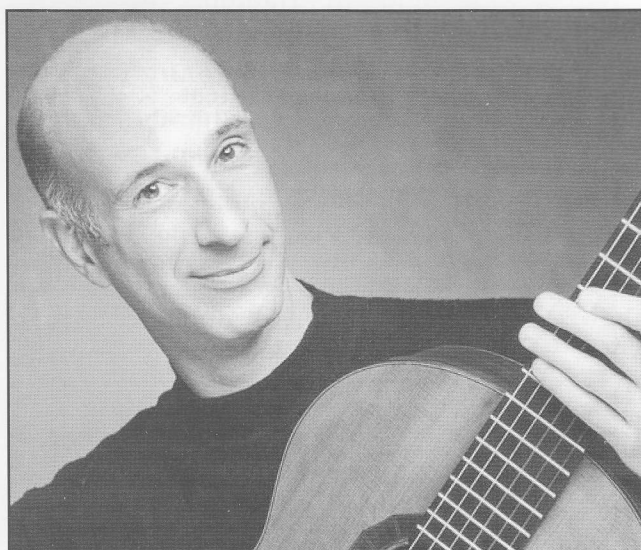
'The amount of really fine chamber music with guitar written in Manhattan in the last twenty-five years alone warrants some special notice. I wanted to have all four guitar faculty members perform and have a good number of current and recent students participate as well,' says guitar department co-chair David Leisner.

'My co-artistic-director Mark Delpriora and I settled on four duos and two works for larger ensemble. The biggest work on the programme was the live, 15-guitar version of Steve Reich's *Electric Counterpoint*. Usually performed with solo guitarist and CD, it's rare to see and hear the live version of this Minimalist guitar masterpiece. Fourteen students played with me in this performance - a fun opportunity, I thought, to mix faculty with students.

'Sebastian Currier, MSM alumni, former guitarist and recent Grawemeyer Award winner, had written a sextet in the 90s called *Broken Consort* for bowed strings, winds and guitars in pairs, and I remembered hearing it at its premiere and thought this rarely performed work needed revisiting. Two superb women composers, Joan Tower and Barbara Kolb, each wrote a masterful duo with guitar - Tower's *Snow Dreams* with flute and Kolb's *Umbrian Colors* with violin. And rounding off the programme were two works for voice and guitar by the two artistic directors - Mark Delpriora's *Five Songs on Texts of James Joyce* with soprano and my recently completed *Three James Tate Songs*, written for David Starobin and baritone Patrick Mason, who premiered the work in Philadelphia a few weeks before, but wasn't able to do this concert and was replaced by a fine student baritone.

'A gargantuan effort was made to present this concert with the best possible preparation, and I'm happy that the large audience that attended responded so positively and powerfully both to the programme itself and the performances,' Leisner says.

The event, called Chamber Music with the Guitar, (presented at MSM's Borden Auditorium, an art deco beauty of a hall) proved to be an inspired musical event which included superb faculty member performances by David Leisner, David Starobin, Mark Delpriora and



David Leisner.

Oren Fader, who performed the earlier-mentioned Barbara Kolb piece with violinist Jennifer Choi.

Mark Delpriora points out, 'This concert reflects the intense interest of the faculty and students to continue the serious development of the guitar repertoire. Its focus on chamber music compositions with guitar by New York composers reflects the enormously vital guitar culture this city currently has and, in fact, has always had since the days of Mozzani and Oyanguren.'

The New York Classical Guitar Society recently presented its own long afternoon concert devoted entirely to celebrating guitar works of Mannes faculty member and composer Terry



David Starobin.

COURTESY: MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Champlin, featuring performances by several conservatory students. Champlin, who teaches ensemble performance at Mannes, had first studied theoretical physics before taking up guitar and music studies with cellist Luis Garcia Renart, violinist Mark Sokol and guitarist Alexander Bellow. He also studied composition with David Loeb and Robert Cuckson. Mr. Champlin and his wife, singer/guitarist Helen Avakian, opened the programme with a piece based on a Yeats poem *Portions of the Year*, with Mr. Champlin avowing that he's not a fan of Yeats except for this particular song, as he finds much of the poet's work to be too intellectual for his taste.

MSM graduate student Kurt Toriello performed Champlin's *Be Still and Know that I am God Theme and 12 Variations*, which included a homage to Schubert on his Hippner Hauser model guitar. Toriello, who earned his undergraduate degree at Mannes, is currently a student of David Leisner and teaches guitar to children in music outreach programmes.

Mannes student and Bulgarian guitarist Vilian Ivantchev performed *Love Song and Variations*, accompanied by Estonian violinist Sabina Torosjan. Ivantchev had won the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center Award which led to a performance at Alice Tully Hall. *Klocworks* was written for and performed

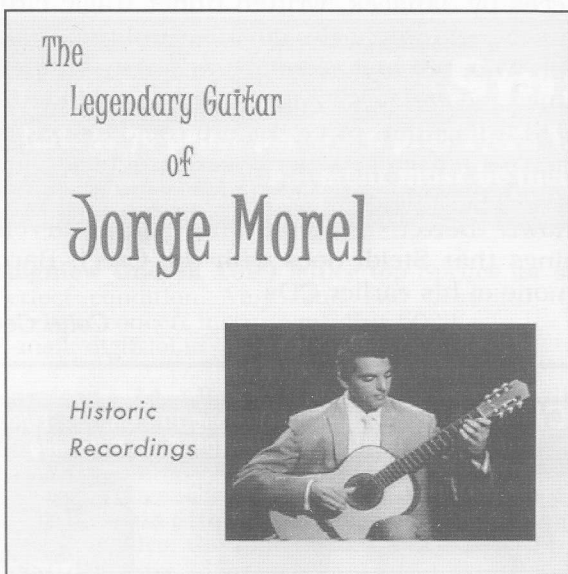
by Mannes student and Polish guitarist Sylwia Kloc. Ms. Kloc and her violinist sister Lydia comprise the Sonata Duo, which plays traditional and folk music from Poland and Eastern Europe. Ms. Kloc, who studied at Mannes with Frederic Hand, also performs Renaissance lute and Baroque guitar.

And music at the close was written for and performed by Juilliard guitar graduate student Paul Smith. Smith is also a composer and devotee of new music. Other performers who took part in a guitar quintet piece, *Harp of David*, include Mannes students Jorge Gavidia, Chelsea Pita and Victor Main.

Champlin, Avakian and Torosjan returned to the stage to perform their *To Match the Voice and the Face* for voice, violin and two guitars, followed by *Dance (from 'Accompaniment to a Dance')* for violin and 2 guitars, (Torosjan, Avakian and Champlin again) followed by an Avakian-Champlin duet of his wistful, haunting piece, *Epilogue*.

As Kurt Toriello informed me afterward, the very American, folksy homespun idiom which is Champlin's style reflects only about a tenth of what music he has written. A special mention must be made to New York Classical Guitar Society member Mark Greenberg, for his private sponsorship and to the guitar society's new president, John Olson, for the extraordinary effort in coordinating this event.

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1	Danza Brasileira (Morel)	2:11
2	Blue Samba (Morel)	2:43
3	Zipcode (Morel)	2:26
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5	El Humahuajeño (Zakdivar)	3:55
6	Greensleeves (Traditional)	2:23
7	Sevilla (Albeniz)	4:34
8	Yellow Bird (Traditional)	3:13
9	Jugueteando (Morel)	1:44
10	Girl From Ipanema (Jobim)	2:18
11	Chopi (Escobar)	3:37
12	Arada (Torroba)	3:24
13	Cancion Del Viento (Traditional)	4:26
14	Romanza (Paganini)	4:03
15	Solcares (Turina)	1:49
16	Misionera (Bustamante)	2:40
17	La Chiquinquireña (Urdaneta)	2:53
18	El Pampeano (Floury)	1:59
19	Mosaico Español (Morel)	3:59



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