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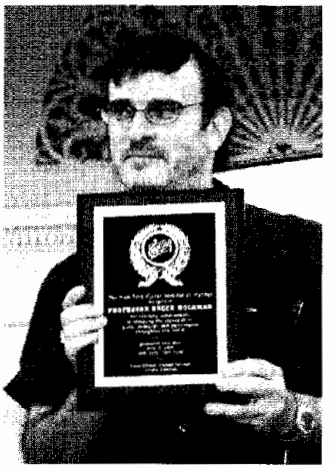
2005 New York Guitar Seminar at Mannes

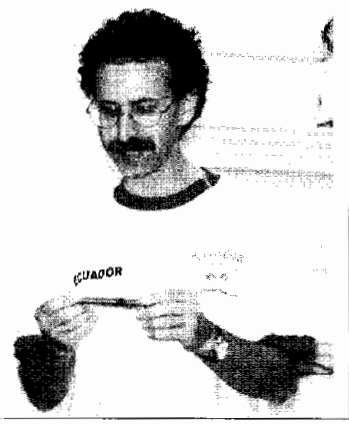
This past summer's Fifth New York Guitar Seminar at Mannes, "El Maestro: Tradition of the Masters" focused on guitar pedagogy, including a tribute to the head of Florida State University's guitar program, Bruce Holzman. The five day event included evening faculty concerts featuring guest artists Eliot Fisk, Stephen Robinson, Adam Holzman, William Carter, Michael Chapdelaine, Ricardo Iznaola, Ricardo Cobo and the Newman & Oltman Guitar Duo.

Michael Newman, the program's Co-Artistic Director along with Laura Oltman, had first met Bruce Holzman at the New York apartment of their teacher, Albert Valdes Blain, in 1971. "Laura studied with Bruce in the mid 1970s, which is when I first met her at Florida State University after traveling to Tallahassee to play a concert," Newman says. "We have Bruce to thank for bringing us together so many years ago. Next year, Laura and I will be celebrating our 25th wedding anniversary. To have so many of Bruce's protégés—who are now international performers, recording artists and university teachers themselves—come to New York to honor Bruce was a great privilege. Our only disappointment is not being able to have invited all of Bruce's incredible students, like Andrew Zohn, Elliot Frank, Mary Akerman, Bill Hearn, and tons more of them."

Nearly one hundred participants and faculty from all over the world—Russia, Brazil, Scotland, Bermuda, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Canada and Puerto Rico—took part in a variety of classes. Music theory professor Christopher Park led a discussion on approaching repetition in nineteenth century musical forms. Baroque guitarist and scholar William Carter introduced seventeenth century transcriptions of Gaspar Sanz in a lecture entitled, "Ornamentation for Guitarists." Matthew Dunne, who teaches at Marshall University in West Virginia, offered a course in arranging solutions for jazz guitar that included basic chord voicing exercises, voice leading and common jazz progressions. Dunne's work, *Gypsy Flower*, can be heard on the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet's Grammy Award-winning CD, *Guitar Heroes* (Telarc).

Leo Welch, who serves as assistant dean at Florida State University's School of Music, presented a class entitled "The Value of Informed Guitar Performance," a pragmatic application of music theory. The panel, "Trends in Pedagogy," featured guest speakers Bruce Holzman, Lily Afshar, Laura Oltman, Adam Holzman, Michael Chapdelaine, Roger Allen Cope, Leo Welch and one impromptu, drop-in guest trying to hide in the back





From left: Michael Chapdelaine, Martha and Tom Humphrey; Laura Oltman, Michael Newman, João Aris

row, Ben Verdery.

Bruce Holzman advises, "It is better to play a simple piece to demonstrate control." He uses Aaron Shearer's Method, and Scott Tennant's *Pumping Nylon* series, in addition to Carcassi, Sor, Aguado, and Carlevaro studies. Holzman also suggests using a diverse number of textbooks because he finds there is only so much information that can be distilled from any one book.

Lily Afshar prefers her auditioning students to perform three pieces in three different styles to demonstrate a range in repertoire. Lily told the audience that she takes students for a long walk outside at the University of Memphis to sing their pieces and finds this frees them up to become better musicians.

Michael Chapdelaine approaches teaching through imagining putting himself in the place of the student and finding an empathic way to communicate what needs to be learned. Adam Holzman sees teaching as a constant learning experience and finds it most productive to specify what needs to be accomplished in each lesson. From the back row, Verdery put in a vote for his favorite teaching resources: the EGTA (the European Guitar Teachers Association), Gerald Garcia's work, Frederic Noad, Suzuki, Frank Longay and Norma McNamara.

"You have to find the skills of motivation," Adam Holzman added. "You will find some people you cannot motivate but if you can reach eight out of ten students, you're doing a good job. The best players are very self-motivated because they want to get better. And the difference between the good student and the not-so-good student is always self-discipline."

For the tribute and roast of Bruce Holzman's career, Michael Newman tearfully presented Bruce Holzman with a Lifetime Achievement Award consisting of a black ballpoint pen with the Mel Bay logo. Laura Oltman came to the rescue with the real award plaque.

Ricardo Iznaola, who heads the guitar department at the University of Denver, presented "Training for Facility: A Workshop in Technical Awareness," a comprehensive and well-received discussion of essential components of learning and teaching the guitar. His book, *Ricardo Iznaola: On Practicing*, is available through the Mel Bay catalog.

Tim Brookes, author of *Guitar: An American Life* (Grove Press), presented a panel called "Guitar Makers and Their Secrets." Brookes had asked guitar maker Rick Davis of Vermont to create a new guitar to replace his beloved guitar, which had been destroyed by airline baggage handlers. Brookes' book delves into this story along with an exploration of the history and symbolism of the guitar in America. Davis displayed various beautiful wood backs he uses for guitars and demonstrated the tapping technique for discerning tonal quality of each wood.

The scene-stealer of the event was Luthier Thomas Humphrey's unveiling of his latest guitar creation, a guitar which looks like a normal six-string classical from the front, with a spectacular laminated painting encompassing the entire back (featured on the cover of this issue of *Soundboard*). The painting, rendered by New York artist Tamara Codor, features three women acrobats in mid-flight, rendered in an art deco reminiscent of another Tamara—Tamara de Lempicka—with a palette of ochres, greens, yellow, and rich copper hues matching the neck of the guitar. Humphrey's unique construction for this guitar, which differs slightly from his Millennium models in order to accommodate the painting, has resulted in an enhanced resonance. In his words:

> It seems almost contradictory or heretical that I would put the beautiful Brazilian rosewood on the inside and the maple veneer on the outside, but I wanted the guitar to sound like a rosewood guitar while giving Tamara a closed pore surface to paint on. We had thought that with the tremendous shrinkage that you get with rosewood, nothing could be worse than to have the paint and varnish shrink into one of the ladies eyes or something.
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> The fact that the back is arched and the sides are bent meant that we did not have to worry about the warping of a two-ply laminate versus an uneven number which is usually the case when the object is to keep the surface flat. Having reduced the number of laminates to

Clockwise from top left: Michael Newman and Sharon Isbin; Ricardo Iznaola and Michele Holzman; Michael, Laura, and Mariano Aguirre; Roger Cope and Julia Crowe; Ricardo Cobo and the painted guitar.

two, what we found was that the back and sides are much lighter and probably much stronger, and somehow resulted in a bigger, fuller sound. Some really great guitar ears that saw and played the guitar have told me they think it is the best sounding ever.

Painting on musical instruments was very popular during the Renaissance and Baroque periods and even into the nineteenth century. Generally, the soundboards of the wooden instruments were not painted, perhaps due to a fear that the heavy oil paint would diminish the sound. For this reason, we will not be painting the soundboards either.

Humphrey first met Tamara Codor when she was living as a neighbor near their home in Gardiner, New York. She had given his daughter painting and piano lessons but had no idea he'd stumbled upon the painter he had been seeking for years until he had the opportunity to leaf through her portfolio, filled with original and sophisticated classic figure drawings detailed in ink and watercolor over pages torn from old nineteenth century book. "Tamara has a somewhat unique style of combining classical painting with abstract modernism; just like me," he says. "I make a typical classical guitar with modern ideas incorporated."

Humphrey plans to create a signature collectors' series of painted guitars, all featuring paintings that share a thematic musical connection, such as sirens: Sheherezade, the Greek muses. Recognizing that the nudity on his first painted guitar, the "Traveling Acrobats," might be too frank for some people's taste, Humphrey intends to have future painted figures rendered with a bit more veiling. He is open to suggestions for new figure painting themes as well.

Codor, who studied art in the Loire Valley in France and has painted at an artists' retreat in Argentina, was recently commissioned to work on the interior of a new Manhattan store for the exclusive jeweler Van Cleef & Arpels. (For a several more close-up shots of the "Traveling Acrobats Guitar," visit Humphrey's website, www.thomashumphrey.com.)

The Sixth New York Guitar Seminar at Mannes, July 5-9, 2006, will focus on "New York: Performers and Teachers from The Big Apple," and will feature Sharon Isbin, Benjamin Verdery, David Starobin, David Leisner, the Newman and Oltman Guitar Duo, Dominic Frasca, Jorge Morel, Michael Lorimer, Mariano Aguirre, Dennis Koster, Jorge Caballero, Fred Hand, Kevin Gallagher, and others. For more information, log onto www.mannes.edu/guitar.

The seminar would like to acknowledge the support of its major sponsors—Mel Bay Publications, the Augustine Foundation, the D'Addario Foundation for the Performing Arts, Guitar Salon International, Fretsonly.com and the Musical Heritage Society, plus the volunteers, the staff of Mannes College and Columbia University, and the year-round efforts of Mariano Aguirre, the seminar's administrative coordinator who teaches guitar and theory in the Mannes Preparatory Division. — *Julia Crowe*