

◆ Classical Guitar Society of Washington, D.C. ◆

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November's Performer

Gustavo Them: Olé!

Gustavo Them (pronounced "Tem") is the society's featured performer in November. Them was born in 1966 and started his musical studies with Manuel González in the "Escola d'Arts Musical Luthier" in Barcelona. In 1982, he was awarded the second prize in the "Jugend Musiziert" competition organized by the German Institute.

Them earned the "Título Profesor de Guitarra" (equivalent to the bachelor's degree) at the Barcelona Music Conservatory, obtaining the first prize in guitar. He obtained a grant in 1990 to study with Alberto Ponce during the "Cursos Internacionais da Musica da Costa do Estoril" in Portugal.

In 1991, Them earned the "Título Profesor Superior de Guitarra" (equivalent to the master's degree) in the Oscar Espla Music Conservatory, in Alicante, studying with José Tomas. He is now completing his "Graduate Performance Diploma" at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University on a full scholarship, studying with Manuel Barrueco.

Them also has studied with David Russell and he has taught music at the Olesa and Alicante Music Municipal Schools, as well as at the summer course of the Joan Valls Music School in Caldes d'Montbui, Barcelona. Them

has performed as a soloist and with chamber music ensembles in Spain, Portugal, and, most recently, in the United States. For his guitar society appearance, Them will present works by Sor, Brouwer, Ponce, Rodrigo, Albeniz, and Barrios. □

Calendar of Events

Oct 30 - Brazilian Masters in Concert (Laurindo Almeida, Carlos Barbosa-Lima, and Charlie Byrd), 8:00 p.m. at Shriver Hall Auditorium, Baltimore, Maryland. Information: (410) 516-7157.

Nov 7 - Assad Brothers, 7:30 p.m. at the George Mason University Center for the Arts, Fairfax, Virginia. Information: (703) 993-8888.

Nov 13 - Gustavo Them, 2:00 p.m. at the Little Falls Public Library, 5501 Massachusetts Avenue, Bethesda, Maryland. FREE. Information: (301) 495-2703.

Dec 11 - Risa Carlson and Martha Masters, guitar duo, 2:00 p.m. at the Little Falls Public Library, 5501 Massachusetts Avenue, Bethesda, Maryland. FREE. Information: (301) 495-2703.

Jan 16, 1994 - Christopher Parkening, 7:00 p.m. at the George Mason University Center for the Arts, Fairfax, Virginia. Information: (703) 993-8888. □

Feb 20 - Adam Holzman, 2:00 p.m. at the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland. Information: (410) 242-2744.

Mar 26 - Paco de Malaga, 8:00 p.m. at the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland. Information: (410) 242-2744.

December's Performers

Carlson and Masters: Dynamic Duo!

In December, we are pleased to present **Risa Carlson and Martha Masters**. Risa Carlson began studying guitar at age six with her father, Bill Carlson. She continued her studies with Jeffrey Meyerriecks, and now is pursuing a bachelor's degree in music at the Peabody Institute, studying with Manuel Barrueco.

Martha Masters also began studying guitar at age six, and later studied with Jeffrey Meyerriecks. She completed her bachelor's degree in music at the Peabody Institute and is now pursuing her master's degree, studying with Manuel Barrueco.

Carlson and Masters have been playing as a duo for more than a year. They were awarded second place as an ensemble in the 1993 National Guitar Summer Workshop and will perform over the next year in competitions in France and Baltimore. For their guitar society program, Carlson and Masters will perform works by Sor, Albeniz, Machado and Brahms. □

Attention society members: Pay your dues! See page 4.

Want to join a guitar ensemble? Call Cathy Fleming at (202) 546-8364.

Point of View

Me and My Gack

By Don Sauter

You've all seen the late-night tv commercial...

Voice-over: "Has this ever happened to you...?" Cut to: frazzled guitarist already running late for his weekly ensemble session. One arm in a death grip on his collapsible music stand. The other clutching his footstool. Left hand pressing a stack of von Call parts to his chest. Precious electronic tuner cradled in the right. Leans down to grab his guitar case with the only available pinky. Quartz metronome starts to slip out of his shirt pocket. Tries to rescue it. Loses grip on tuner, music stand, footstool, etc. A symphony of clanging, clattering, ripping, tearing... Cut to: close-up of face. Abject misery, defeat, despair... Voice-over: "This need never happen to you again. To order your very own Guitar Accessory Carrying Kase, grab your credit card and call 1-800-123-GACK. Not available in stores. Act now, before this offer expires."

Missed that one, eh? Actually, I made it up. The commercial, that is. The GACK is real, even if only one-of-a-kind.

As soon as I attended my first guitar workshop, I saw a need for a convenient way to carry around all the "other stuff" a guitarist needs. Sure, there are ways of making do. You can toss it all in a canvas bag, for example. And if

you're the sort who worries about the music stand ripping up the music, or the footstool smashing the quartz tuner, you can resign yourself to wrapping everything up individually before throwing it all together.

I found that was more bother than I could stand. I would go bonkers even if the ensemble had only to move from one side of the room to the other. Which was less of a pain - packing everything up and unpacking on the other side, or three or four separate trips back and forth across the room? Grrr...

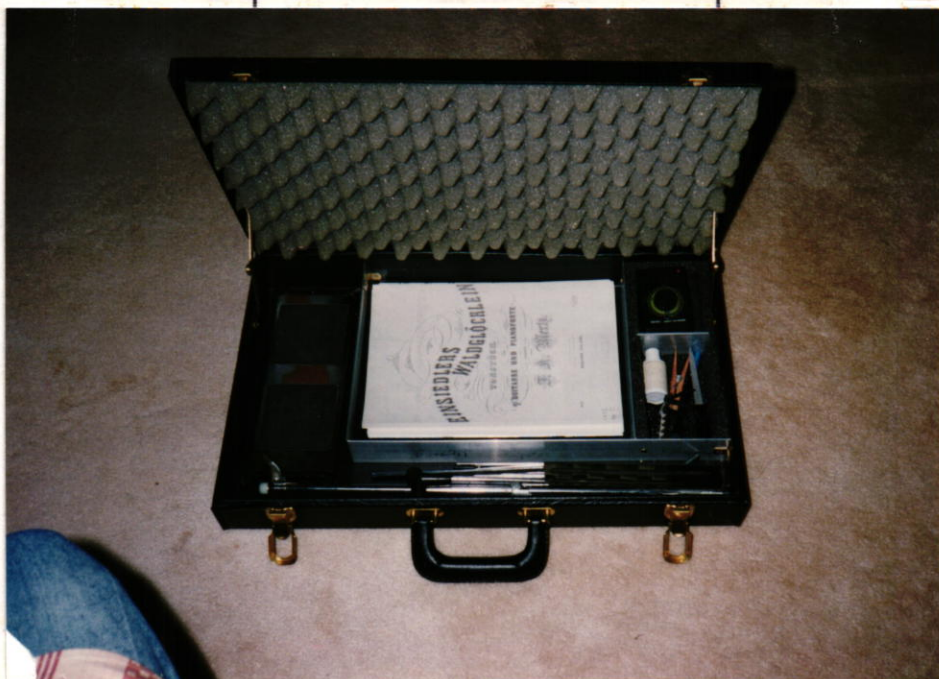
I took measurements of all my guitar paraphernalia, designed a case that had a separate, instantly accessible compartment for each item, and had my father build it out of wood. It took him 10 minutes. (Actually, he made two in 10 minutes - the first was ruined when the power saw hit a nail while cutting the lid off.) Thanks, Pop!

Besides compartments for the music, music stand and footstool, this first Gack had a padded compartment for the metronome and another compartment for odds and ends -- pens, white-out, nail file, sandpaper, capo, music-page-holders a k a clothespins, etc.

My Gack became an instant "necessity" and served me faithfully for about 8 years. It seemed that most people, though, viewed it with bemusement, apparently having trouble seeing its obvious indispensability. In spite of that I figured, "Surely, there are lots of other guitarists on the go - I can't be the only one who needs something like this." I began to look into having it commercially produced.

A bit of searching at the patent office seemed to indicate that special-purpose carrying cases are hardly ever patented -- I suspect because such a patent would be very easy to get around. I found only a tiny handful of similar patents, such as one for a case for artist's supplies. (By way of comparison, there are so many patents on automatic music page turners that 38 "subclasses" are required!)

The results of a modest marketing study were not too clear. Almost everyone who responded said they were "interested" or "very interested" in the Gack, but only a small percentage had responded. Most people were content to just steam the stamp off of the return SASE -- a real gold mine, huh?



A case manufacturer, Howe Industries, constructed a prototype for me. They did this amazingly inexpensively and the finished product turned out very nicely. A common assumption is that my Gack is a converted briefcase. In fact, no briefcases on the market are

(Cont., p. 3.)

Classical Guitarist Don Sauter's GACK

(GACK, from p. 2.)
nearly large enough.

The biggest improvement over the original wooden model is the convertability of the two smallest compartments. A movable divider allows you to set up one or two compartments and adjust the size of the largest to fit your own equipment. Also, the entire inner top is foam-padded. While this isn't a necessity for the non-electronic items, it helps to secure everything and eliminates clanking.

As it now stands, I have no intention of trying to market the Gack. The biggest outstanding problems are expense and weight. What one would have to charge to make any sort of profit on it, the typical guitarist probably wouldn't want to pay. And ideally, it should be made of injection-molded plastic to minimize the weight, but the set-up costs for that would be frightening. Anyhow, I've got a Gack for myself and wouldn't be caught without it.

Oh yeah, and a pox on all of the houses of that guy who, in response to the survey question, "Is the name Gack ok?" wrote, "It sounds like somebody's sick."

Sight Reading

by Kevin Vigil

Q: How do you get a guitarist to play quietly?

A: Put music in front of him.

Like most guitar players, I began by playing chords with strumming and picking patterns. When I began to play Rock and Roll, I learned scale and arpeggio patterns. Even though I knew all of these patterns, I didn't know what the heck I was doing. Trying to read these chords and patterns in musical notation was like trying to decode hieroglyphics. When I began my studies of classical guitar (which requires the ability to read music), I

was in a deep rapid river without a life jacket.

I'm sure that I'm not the only guitarist that has experienced a sight reading problem. As a matter of fact, I have known very few guitarists that could read well. I even know some who pride themselves on the fact that they can't read one note of music. Would you be proud if you couldn't read the English language. My point is that many guitarists (dare I say "most"?) are musically illiterate.

What causes this problem in guitarists? Some say that because the same note can be played in several places, it's just too darn confusing. Some say that it's difficult to read more than one voice part at once. Others are able to read well in first position, but once they're past the fifth fret, one fret looks the same as another. These are all legitimate concerns, but they are not impossible hurdles. It is time for the excuses to stop!

How do you begin? The first step is to make a real commitment. Not just two weeks; give it everything you've got until you know the language well. That's right, learning to sight read is the same mental process as learning a foreign language. Most people learn languages well when in the environment. Put yourself in the sight reading environment every single day.

The next step is to have a lot of reading material. If you can't read at all, purchase some form of guitar method. Most methods introduce you to the notes in the first position. They also give you short pieces to practice the notes you've learned. The only problem with most methods is that there are not enough pieces for each set of notes. If you practice the same pieces over and over, you eventually learn (or worse, memorize) them. You need a ton of music at each level so that you are reading and not memorizing.

A good supplement for this purpose is *Sight Reading for the Classical Guitar* by Robert Benedict (published by Belwin Inc.). This is published in two volumes: levels 1-3 and levels 4-5. After you learn the first position notes on the first three strings, begin reading in third and fifth positions as well. These are explained in the back of the first volume.

After completing the first volume go on to the second, but at the same time increase the amount of reading by working your way through some classical guitar anthologies. Most are graded from easiest to hardest. Try not to play the same pieces over and over again, no matter how tempting. This not to say that you can never play the piece again, but put a couple of weeks in between.

After completing volume two of Robert Benedict's series, I recommend working from *Progressive Reading for Guitarists* by Stephen Dodgson and Hector Quine (published by RICORDI). This will be challenging, but at this point you should be ready.

Last, and possibly most important, get a sight reading partner (any instrument). Read through duets, trios, quartets, etc. Playing with another person helps your rhythm, phrasing and listening skills. It also humbles you as inspiration to be a better reader.

Sight reading opens up a whole new world to the musical experience. Fight musical illiteracy and learn to read. You'll be glad you did! □

Classical Guitar Society of Washington, D.C.

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Newsletter contributions should be sent to the Publisher, Classical Guitar Society of Washington, D.C., 1001 Spring Street, No. 726, Silver Spring, MD 20910 □