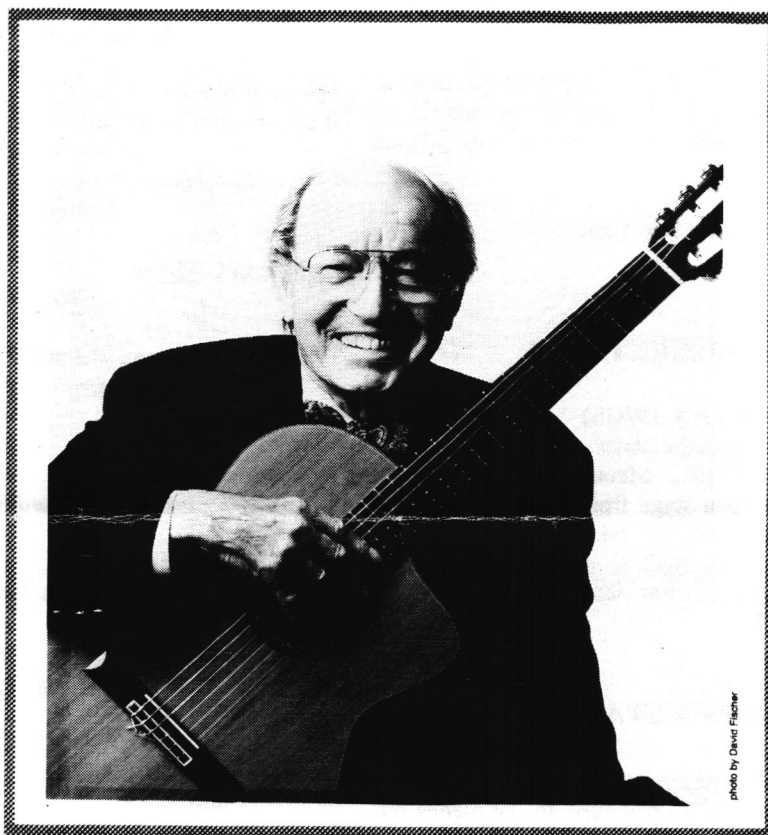

Washington Guitar Society

No. 48

January/February 2000

CHARLIE BYRD 1925 - 1999



As most of you probably know, Charlie Byrd passed away on December 2, 1999 at the age of 74. Charlie was and is certainly an inspiration to many people in the Washington, DC area and around the world. There will no doubt be tributes written in all the major guitar magazines over the next several months that will list his vast accomplishments and the people with whom he collaborated. Since Charlie lived and worked in our area, many have gotten to know Charlie as a person as well as a guitarist. For this reason, I invited Myrna Sislen from the Washington Guitar Quintet to write a personal tribute to Charlie. She accepted the invitation and shares some of her memories with us in this issue.

The Washington Guitar Society would like to send our sympathies to all of his family, friends and fans.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

It was great to see so many of you at the Members' Recital on December 17, which included many new performers and several long-overdue return engagements. Featured was a wonderful variety of music for all ages and playing levels. You can see the program of players and what they played in the next column.

Our schedule for 2000 includes Gray Snead on January 21, Corey Whitehead on February 18, and Paul Moeller on March 17. It will then be time for another Members' Recital or Youth Concert.

Sometime soon we will be moving to our new location at the Chevy Chase Community Center, but for the months of January and February we will remain at the Guy Mason Recreation Center.

I hope to see more of you in the new year.

John Rodgers

WGS/WCM MEETINGS

The Washington Guitar Society (WGS) has meetings one Friday of every month. Specific dates and performers are listed in the calendar of events. Meetings with a featured performer begin with an open stage from 7:30-8:00 pm and continue with the performance at 8 pm. Meetings are free and open to the public. A hat will be passed for voluntary contributions to the artist. For information call John Rodgers at (202) 686-1020.

WGS OPEN STAGE

The Washington Guitar Society hosts an open stage before each of its meetings. This is a great time to try pieces out for a very interested audience. It's not a competition, just plain fun. The open stages start at 7:30 followed by the featured performer at 8 pm. The next open stage is set for January 21. It will take place at the Guy Mason Recreational Center, 3600 Calvert St. NW, Washington, DC (1/2 block east of Wisconsin Ave., north of Georgetown). For further information, please call John Rodgers at (202) 686-1020.

Officers/Editors

President:	John Rodgers	(202) 686-1020
Vice-President:	Bill Carlson	(703) 548-3703
Treasurer:	Beverly Ross	(301) 927-7833
Secretary:	Morris Lancaster	(301) 469-7599
	e-mail: mlancast@bellatlantic.net	
Newsletter Publisher:	Kevin Vigil	(703) 644-1659

WGS Members' Recital
Friday, December 17, 1999

Country Dance F. Carulli
Aaro Tanner

Duo in C F. Carulli
Aaro Tanner and John Rodgers

Concerto in D Major A. Vivaldi
 Largo and Allegro
 Angus Fitchie, soloist
 with the Levine Guitar Ensemble

The First Noel Christmas Carols
 O Come All Ye Faithful
Levine Guitar Ensemble:
Bob Nagle, Lindsay Mucka, Stephen Head,
Veronika Tulipan

Prelude in C Major J.S. Bach
Bill Clausen

Two-Part Inventions #13 and #8 J.S. Bach
Bill Clausen and John Rodgers

Ojos Azules Chilean Folk Song
 What Child is This? Christmas Carol
Bob Wise and John Rodgers

Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring J.S. Bach
Alexis Beveridge

O Come All Ye Faithful Christmas Carol
 Hark the Herald Angels Sing
 What Child is This?
Alexis and Claire Beveridge

Etudes #7 and #2 M. Carcassi
Chad Llewellyn

Sertaneja Brazilian Folk Songs
 Carnavalito
Chad Llewellyn and John Rodgers

Are You Sleeping? Two-Part Round
Sophie and Norman Wereley

Bourree in E Minor J.S. Bach
Michael Cunningham

Duet in A F. Carulli
Michael Cunningham and John Rodgers

*Special thanks to all those who participated in
 this Members Recital to make it a success.*

REMEMBERING CHARLIE

by Myrna Sislen

I first met Charlie Byrd at American University when I was a freshman and he was the head of the guitar department. He was my teacher for the next five years and my friend, mentor and colleague for the next 30 years.

So many memories flood back--the good times we had and the important effect he had on my life and on the lives of so many people through out the world.

When I was first studying with him, Charlie would always advise me to go into another business, any business other than guitar. "Why not become a race car driver," he would say to me. "That's good, a race car driver."

The lessons at AU were always an education. I was nervous for every lesson and finally Charlie said to me; "you always have to be 180% sure of yourself in the lesson. That way you can deteriorate 100% and you will still be 80% right." To this day, I give the same advice to my students.

When I had difficulty playing the Sor studies, Charlie started calling them my "Sor" spots. Charlie taught me to feel the essence of the music and appreciate the composers intent. Most of all he taught me to swing with the music. Villa Lobos came alive for me when Charlie would rub his hands together making a rhythm for Prelude IV or Etude 11 or 7.

Music was the most important thing for Charlie. At a time when other guitarists were obsessing over finger nail shapes, Charlie was focusing on the most important aspects of the music. He was the voice of reason, and it turned out that he was correct. "You can pluck it with a chicken feather if you want, as long as you make good music." That was Charlie--he had a way of getting to the core of an idea in just a few words. He didn't say much, but when he did, you knew it was important.

My association with Charlie Byrd was connected to the classical guitar. He may not have been the greatest classical player in the world, but I watched and observed as audiences listened to the pieces he played in the jazz clubs. Charlie always included one set of solo classical pieces in each show. It was the way he played, the love and respect he gave the music, and also his own persona, charisma if you will, that touched people. People who would never have listened to classical music were not only listening, but loving it.

In 1986, Charlie joined with Jeff Meyerriecks, Larry Snitzler, John Marlow (later Phil Mathieu), and myself to form the Washington Guitar Quintet. Once again he was embarking on a new musical adventure. There had never been a guitar quintet before. Charlie would say, "... maybe there is a reason for that."

The years playing with the Quintet have been wonderful. We all joined the group at a time when we had independent



CHARLIE BYRD/
THE WASHINGTON
GUITAR QUINTET

careers as soloists, or in Charlies' case a trio, and we found that traveling with the quintet was a great joy.

Getting five guitarists to play as a cohesive unit is no easy task. It took us four years to learn to have a sense of ensemble and longer for Charlie to teach us classical players to play jazz, to relax with the rhythms and swing.

Our rehearsals consisted of a few hours of intense playing, well maybe a couple hours of intense playing; story telling by Charlie, and the all important lunch (which became a stiff competition that Charlie always won with a new soup or salad creation). Charlie Byrd was a great cook. He was aggressive with herbs and seasonings, right on the cutting edge, but never over that edge. His lunches were always a work of art. The rule was that whoever had the rehearsal at their house had to create the lunch. As I said, the competition was fierce. Once, when it was my turn, I made a soup consisting of all fresh vegetables from the Arlington County Farmers Market. Charlie took one taste and asked " did you make this soup this morning, or yesterday". I answered that I had made it the night before. He took another taste and asked, "did you add the ingredients all at once or one at a time." I said that I had added them all at once. He then took another taste and said, " you know you will never be able to make this again."

And of course there was the sailing. Charlie loved to sail and after rehearsing we would all go out on his boat. It took him years to teach us classical guitarists how to sail. We always turned out to be a "how many guitarists does it take"

joke. But he kept trying, and we loved every minute of it. We would talk about music, gossip about guitarists, and discuss the future of the guitar. And Charlie would tell stories and jokes.

Charlie Byrd was a great story teller. The best I have ever heard. In all the years of touring with the quintet, Charlie regaled us with story after story of all the musical legends he had met through the years, from Django Reinhardt to Duke Ellington to Woody Herman and on and on. Wonderful, funny and touching stories of his childhood in Chuckatuck, Va. and his experiences in Europe during WWII. Never in all those years did he repeat a story. It was truly amazing.

As the years went by and Charlie's health became fragile, we were constantly awed by his playing. He would sometimes be so weak he could hardly walk on stage and then play so beautifully that the rest of us younger and supposedly stronger guitarists would have our breath taken away at the power of his performance. This happened every time we had a concert. Charlie's playing was never affected by his health, as if he were getting his strength from a source greater than us all.

I know that my entire approach to the guitar, to music and to life was from Charlie Byrd. I loved him and I miss him and I thank God that I was lucky enough to have been able to thank him a few days before he died.

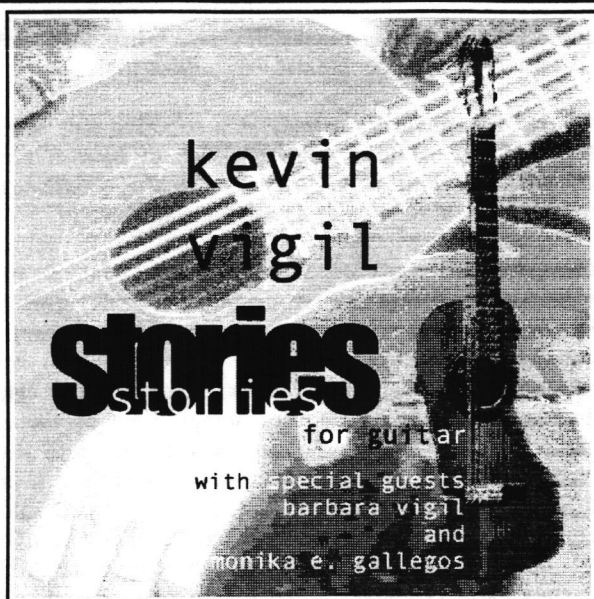
-Myrna Sislen

GRAY SNEAD TO PERFORM FOR WGS FRIDAY, JANUARY 21



Gray Snead is a candidate for a Bachelor's of Music performance and education at George Mason University. He is a student of Larry Snitzler and has studied at the Aspen Summer Music Festival. Gray has been a soloist and ensemble member of the Virginia Commonwealth University Community Guitar Ensemble since 1994. He performs regularly and teaches privately in the D.C. area. Gray is a native of Richmond, Virginia, and now lives in Takoma Park, Maryland.

For further details about Gray Snead's performance, please see the Calendar of Events.



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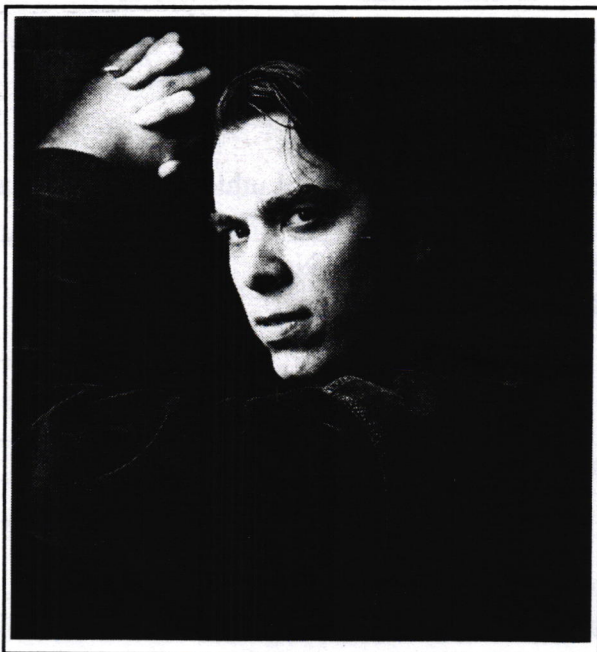


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COREY WHITEHEAD TO PERFORM FOR WGS ON FEBRUARY 18



Corey Whitehead is a graduate of The University of Arizona, where he received his BM and MM Degrees in Guitar Performance. He will complete the DMA Degree in guitar performance with a minor in music theory at The University of Arizona in 2000.

Corey received the 3rd prize at the 1996 National Finals round of the MTNA Collegiate Artists Competition. He won the MTNA Arizona Division and the MTNA Southwest Division competitions in 1995-1996 to earn the right to compete in the finals in 1996 in Kansas City, MO.

Corey performed in the qualifying round of the prestigious GFA International Guitar Competition in 1996 and 1999. He has twice won prizes in the Norman Sholin Competition once the in the Schaffer competition.

Corey has been on the faculty of VCU in Richmond, VA and Pima Community College in Tuscon, AZ.

Corey currently performs modern and period guitar music in private and public engagements throughout the U.S. and abroad. He currently resides in Virginia and Arizona.

For further details about Corey Whitehead's performance, please see the Calendar of Events.

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Calendar of Events

If you know of a performance that does not appear, please send the information to us to include. This includes everything from professionals, degree recitals to teacher studio recitals.

Jan. 14 (Fri.) 7:30-9:30 - Kevin Vigil with guest artists Barbara Vigil (flute) and Monika Gallegos (narrator). Presented by Borders Books and Music 5871 Crossroads Center Way, Bailey's Crossroads, VA. Featuring works from his CD *Stories for Guitar*. For info. call (703) 998-0404.

Jan. 21 (Fri.) 8 pm - Gray Snead. Presented by the **Washington Guitar Society** at the Guy Mason Recreational Center, 3600 Calvert St. NW, Washington, DC (1/2 block east of Wisconsin Ave., north of Georgetown). This concert is free and open to the public, but donations are welcome. For information, call WGS president John Rodgers at (202) 686-1020.

Jan. 28 (Fri.) 8 pm - Charlie Byrd Quintet. *"As you may know by now, Charlie Byrd passed away in December. Our January concert will go on as scheduled, featuring the incredible musicians with whom Charlie had been associated for so long." Performing at the Performing Arts Hall at the Womens Club of Chevy Chase, 7931 Connecticut Ave., Chevy Chase, MD. Tickets are \$30 in advance and \$35 at the door. For information, call (301) 654-6874 or (202) 265-3915.*

Feb. 5 (Sat.) 8 pm - Ernesto Tamayo performs the Concierto de Aranjuez with the McLean Orchestra, Colonel Arnald D. Garbriel, Conductor. Tickets \$20-general, \$17-Senior/student, \$5-Youth (12 & under). For information call (703) 893-8646 or visit www.tmo.org.

Feb. 18 (Fri.) 8 pm - Corey Whitehead. Presented by the **Washington Guitar Society** at the Guy Mason Recreational Center, 3600 Calvert St. NW, Washington, DC (1/2 block east of Wisconsin Ave., north of Georgetown). This concert is free and open to the public, but donations are welcome. For information, call WGS president John Rodgers at (202) 686-1020.

Feb. 25 (Fri.) 8 pm - Franco Platino. Performing at the Performing Arts Hall at the Womens Club of Chevy Chase, 7931 Connecticut Ave., Chevy Chase, MD. Tickets are \$18 in advance and \$23 at the door. For information, call (301) 654-6874 or (202) 265-3915.

Mar. 17 (Fri.) 8 pm - Paul Moeller. Presented by the **Washington Guitar Society**. Location TBA.

Mar. 24 (Fri.) 8 pm - Paul Galbraith. Performing at the Bradley Hills Church, 6601 Bradley Boulevard, Bethesda, MD. Tickets are \$25 in advance and \$30 at the door. For information, call (301) 654-6874 or (202) 265-3915.