

MAY 2016 NEWSLETTER

**Marcin Dylla Concert at the Turner Sims: 30 April 2016**

This was indeed a memorable concert. Two Society members who heard the whole concert have kindly offered reports, and this being such an outstanding recital it seems worth including edited versions of them both: the first from Martin Slater and the second from Chris Thompson.

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It must be about 6 years since Marcin first came to the Point in Eastleigh to play for us so it was with open arms that SCGS again welcomed him, but this time at the Turner Sims Concert Hall of Southampton University. This is the UK venue of choice for John Williams so there is a natural expectation of an excellent acoustic enabling us to fully absorb the remarkable delicacy of touch and expression that some may say only Marcin is truly capable of generating.

Marcin's programme for the evening was evidently going to be a challenging and ambitious one but throughout he maintained a supremely controlled balance of sensitivity with energy, never once threatening to overplay, and the acoustic of the hall enabled even the most delicate of touches to reach the farthest auditor. For this we were also grateful for the audience sitting captivated and for the most part silent! I think everybody was equally spellbound by the whole performance.

As Marcin said in his introduction to the first piece, *Sonata in C Op.15* by Mauro Giuliani (1781-1829) (a composer well known to guitarists of all levels of skill), a piece seemingly easy to play can be one of the most difficult to play well; be assured that the performance we were treated to was the epitome of classical poise and I would be surprised if the composer himself could have played it better. Marcin continued with a performance of all five *Preludes* by Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959). This was the first of the evening's particular challenges in that it is not standard to hear these pieces played together as a set, but Marcin's deft performance proved that they can be effectively presented as a single five-movement work.

The final presentation of the first half was a work which was almost certainly new to everyone in the audience, the *Sonata Para Guitarra* by the Puerto Rican Roberto Sierra (b.1953). Primarily influenced by dance forms (the Salsa apparently being a favourite of the composer, according to Marcin) Sierra is mostly known for orchestral works, having had a piece titled *Fandangos* performed at the 2002 BBC Proms. The piece is in a more adventurous harmonic language with the spirit of dance being the unifying factor, akin to the motivation behind Beethoven's 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony which Richard Wagner likened to "the apotheosis of the dance".

The second half of the concert was given over by Marcin to just two works, with both being considerable *tours de force*. First came Manuel Maria Ponce's (1882-1948) 25-minute long *Theme, Variations & Fugue on Folia de España*. During this piece Marcin was faultless despite its demanding length. Ponce was also better known for his orchestral works prior to his



fruitful partnership with Andres Segovia. A very satisfying work enhanced by excellent performance. Marcin's final presentation was the *Nocturnal* by Benjamin Britten (1913-76). I remember listening with some trepidation to this piece for the first time performed by its dedicatee Julian Bream (also a notable past performer at the Turner Sims). Every subsequent listening of this piece makes it seem better than before but on this occasion I think Marcin took the red rosette with a totally convincing and committed rendition. I can see why he did not want to perform any encores as to do so would have ruined the final atmosphere of enchantment. Overall, a performance worthy of a renowned fellow countryman of his, Frederick Chopin!

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Those of us who had not previously heard Marcin Dylla play can now understand what all the buzz is about. Marcin has won most of the available music prizes for the guitar and now tours almost constantly, fitting this in with international teaching roles when he can. For example he taught for several days at both the Academy and the College during his stay in the UK for our concert. After he left us he was on his way to Mexico and thence to his new role at the San Francisco Conservatory of music. In 2006 Joaquin Rodrigo's daughter chose him to perform the premier of a newly discovered composition by her father, so he is clearly not short of recognition of his talent.

Marcin started his programme quietly with the *Sonata in C* by Giuliani and to my mind found unexpected emotional depths in this stalwart of the classical repertoire. The quietness of his playing in the first movement, marked *allegro spiritoso*, drew the listener in nicely for what was to come - which was all five of the Villa Lobos *Preludes*, played as a suite. He begged our understanding for the length of the piece thus created, about 20 minutes, but joked " I think we have time don't we?" He played them beautifully, in particular he carried the melodic line of the fourth prelude almost to perfection. The first half ended with Roberto Sierra's *Sonata para Guitarra* with its strong salsa based rhythms and expressive middle movement.

Having warned us that the second half would be darker he started with Ponce's *Theme, Variations and Fugue on Folia de España* , fiendishly difficult, but accomplished with an ease of technique that brought out all the details of the music. And, finally, another masterwork - Benjamin Britten's *Nocturnal*,

op. 70, which was written for Julian Bream. Pairing this with the Ponce was really very clever because the Ponce - obviously - starts with the theme, but the Britten - less obviously (and previously unknown to me) - builds up to and then ends with the theme, creating a great narrative arc across the two pieces. The Nocturnal, in particular, was played with an eerie intensity that reminded me strongly of Britten's other masterwork, the opera *The Turn of the Screw*. When a guitarist can provide the same intensity of musical experience as an opera company you know that something special is happening.

So, we have had another special night at the Turner Sims, now firmly fixed as our regular concert venue. Our thanks go not only to Marcin for such a wonderful concert, but also to Dave Rawlinson for his organisation over the last few years, and to Stuart Christie for taking this over and organising the event.

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### **West Dean International Classical Guitar Festival and Summer School**

**20 - 26 August 2016**

Full details of this major event and booking forms are now available: go to [www.westdean.org.uk/study/short-courses/courses/](http://www.westdean.org.uk/study/short-courses/courses/) then click on Music and scroll down until you find the Guitar Festival.

### **Royal Greenwich Guitar Festival 29 June - 1 July 2016**

The second *Royal Greenwich Guitar Festival* will take place at *Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance* situated on the magnificent grounds of the Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich, London. For information on the festival and booking information please visit [www.greenwichguitarfestival.com](http://www.greenwichguitarfestival.com).

### **Cardiff Guitar Festival July 29 -30 July 2016.**

Visiting artist Craig Ogden, workshops and a focus on chamber music with a performance opportunity to finish. For more information and bookings please visit <http://cardiffguitarfesti.wix.com/2016>.

*Chris Roberts (CGF)*

### **Guitars for sale**

Bill Lynds' *Jose Antonio* guitar purchased from Miles Kent: £1000 or reasonable offer. For details see the March Newsletter or contact Bill at [send2bl@googlemail.com](mailto:send2bl@googlemail.com).

David Chillingworth's *Mañuel Rodriguez* model E: two careful owners, immaculate condition £675.

**Next meeting: Wednesday 25 May 2016 at St Boniface.**

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