

# The Mandolin Journal

November 2016 • Volume XXXIII #4

## 30th Annual Convention: Fellowship and Fun in Philadelphia

by Barbara Conrad



*En Masse orchestra ready to perform*

*photo by Chris Swisher*

Our thirtieth annual convention was a whirl of activity. Time seemed to speed up – it’s hard to believe how quickly such a long-awaited event is over. I’m left with some concert programs, some new music to play and listen to, some new friendships, some lovely memories and some lingering earworms. So I’d call it a total success!

This is down to the tireless efforts of Mark Linkins and his host team from the Mandolin Society of Philadelphia – which consists of the Munier Mandolin and Guitar Orchestra and the Philadelphia Mandolin Ensemble – as well as our board and a few other volunteers.

Our rich feast of mandolin delights had many courses to delight all of us gluttons: concerts, a wide variety of workshops, after-hours playing – and the main course, the en masse orchestra experience.

With more than 150 players from all over North America, and a few from Europe and Asia, it was among the largest convention orchestras, and what a grand sound we made. In only four days, our peerless conductor, Dr. Jim Bates, helped this group master a challenging program and perform at a level to exceed all expectations.

Our program consisted of six pieces, four of them written specifically for mandolin orchestra:

- *Benvenuto: Concert Overture*, by Johan B. Kok
- *Six Easy Evening Entertainments*, Sonata 1 – Allegretto and Minuett, by Giovanni Gualdo (originally for string orchestra)
- *Kalamazoo Swag*, by James Kellaris
- *Intrada and Variations on Chester*, by this year’s composer-in-residence, Neil Gladd
- *Dreamtime*, by Annette Kruisbrink
- *Hoedown*, from “Rodeo”, by Aaron Copland, arranged by former MMQ mandocellist John Imholz

This convention had a focus on ensembles and ensemble work. Our guest star performers were the Modern Mandolin Quartet (MMQ), America’s premier mandolin ensemble. Not only did they entertain us at two of the evening concerts, but the four members also led our sectionals: Matt Flinner for first mandolins; the group’s founder, Dana Rath, for seconds; Radim Zenkl for mandolas; and Adam Roszkiewicz for mandocellos. Mark Davis led the large guitar section.

Some other special guests joined us Saturday for our final rehearsal and concert: seven of Laura Norris’s Mando for Kids students came from Baltimore and sat in with us

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Back Issues of the CMSA Newsletter of last year are available for \$3.00 each. As long as copies last, our introductory issue of 1986 is \$1.00 each. We invite suggestions and written contributions to the Newsletter please email them to CMSAJournal@gmail.com.

All material (items, notes, editorials and advertising) must be submitted by the deadline stated within the Newsletter. Items not received by the deadline will appear in subsequent issues.

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## Editor's Note

Greetings,

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue of the Mandolin Journal!



I would like to extend a special thanks to Barbara Conrad for another terrific convention wrap-up article and for her years of journalism covering her extensive travels to mandolin events around the world (see articles on pages 20-22 and 26-28).

Here in Kalamazoo, the KMGO hosted Chris Acquavella for a weekend concert and workshops. Chris is a rare combination of performer, teacher, conductor, and composer. For more information see the Orchestra News column on page 15 and the review of Chris' new book "The Mandolin Companion" on page 14.

A reminder that the CMSA membership year has changed to January 1st - December 31st. If you haven't renewed yet you can find a renewal form on page 34 or you can renew on the CMSA website <https://classicalmandolinsociety.org/>

The deadline for the next issue of the *Mandolin Journal* will be January 7th. Please email submissions to me at CMSAJournal@gmail.com.

May your holidays be full of joy and music.

Sincerely,  
Jackie Zito

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# Presidents' Message

This year's annual convention was a spectacular success, and on behalf of everyone, we want to thank Mark Linkins, his committee, and the many other volunteers for their untold hours of work put in behind the scenes.

The energy level in Philadelphia was always high, and conversations flowed freely. With such high attendance, this year's convention was an opportunity for us to connect in person with a large percentage of CMSA members. There is one consistent thread in these conversations: our members are eager to find ways to keep the 'convention' dialogue going and exchange ideas year-round.

At this year's convention, we embarked on a pilot project to videotape a specific workshop which we believe has relevance to all CMSA members: Mark & Beverly Davis' workshop on **The Care and Feeding of Today's Mandolin Orchestras: Further Thoughts.**

This workshop was a reprise and extension of last year's very popular workshop. Beverly and Mark addressed a variety of issues confronting today's orchestras: -- rehearsals, membership, finances, touring, exchange concerts, retreats and master classes, repertoire and program planning. Once our videographer, Michael Tognetti, has processed the tape, it will be housed on the CMSA website for members to view.

Coming out of this workshop, we received strong affirmation that our members would benefit from an **online Discussion Forum.** In this forum, questions can be asked, and viewpoints & information specific to our needs can be shared. The topics discussed during the Davis' workshop will provide an excellent starting point for this forum.

Both of these endeavors feed into our vision to add value to membership in CMSA. Watch for an email from our Webmaster as soon as these features become available on our website.

As you will read in another article, nominations are open for a position on the CMSA Board of Directors. We're always looking for enthusiastic people with an interest in growing this wonderful organization. Our website has now been set up with a 'nominating' button, making the process quick and easy. But if you are someone who works better 'behind the scenes', then please consider contacting us directly about working on one of the many smaller projects that need attention. The work of the Board is made easier because of the many volunteers working quietly out of the public view.

Susan & Sue  
president@classicalmandolinsociety.org

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## Milwaukee: Host to our 2017 Convention

submitted by Katy Vandenberg and Fred Pike

Milwaukee: a great place on a great lake. Listen to the cries of seagulls while you take a leisurely stroll along the scenic Riverwalk. Gasp at the beauty and splendor as you watch a show in the fourth-oldest continuously operating theater in the United States. Feel impressed when you discover the history and beauty of the breweries that once made our city home to four of the largest breweries in the world. Step back in time as you peruse the Streets of Old Milwaukee while at the Milwaukee Public Museum or visit one of the largest art museums in the country and be one of the lucky few to watch the wings open and feel like extending your own arms and soaring out over Lake Michigan. Italian, Greek, American, Thai, the Milwaukee Public Market, coffee shops...all are just a short walk from our hotel. Lakefront, beaches, museums, river cruises. Walk to them from the Intercontinental Hotel, a



sophisticated and modern luxury hotel, located in the most ideal spot of downtown. Cream city brick, Italian Renaissance, Victorian, Art Deco architecture. Milwaukee truly is a great place on a great lake and it's only made better when great friends come together and share....some great beer! Please come and enjoy historic Milwaukee with us in October! Watch for the February article that will introduce your hosts, the Milwaukee Mandolin Orchestra, and give insight into what we plan to perform! Prost!

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(continued from page 1)

on our opening piece, *Benvenuto*. They also performed in the foyer before the concert. I had seen them a few years ago in Baltimore, and I don't know what I was expecting, but wow! After only five years, these kids are enjoying playing Vivaldi and other advanced material, including some blisteringly fast Celtic music. Kudos to Laura!



Laura Norris with Mando For Kids students  
Photo by Chris Swisher

The MMQ opened the concert with four numbers, each a different style of music. Then in our final number, *Hoedown*, we rested while they took an extended bluegrass jam. For that piece we were joined by keyboard, timpani and other percussion. The audience loved it, so we gave them a repeat of the last section as an encore.

Thursday evening the host orchestras filled an entire concert program The Munier Mandolin and Guitar Orchestra and Philadelphia Mandolin Ensemble, some of whose members play in both groups, combined for the first half, along with a guest violinist and a soprano. The Media Chamber Chorale joined them for an unforgettable performance of Vivaldi's *Gloria*. We then heard sets by each of the two host groups.



Massed host orchestras with choir, performing Vivaldi's stirring *Gloria*  
Photo by Chris Swisher

Friday's concert was opened by two more small groups, subsets of our host organization, the Munier Society Quartet and the Sycamore Muse Trio. This was followed by a set by MMQ, each piece in a different style, particularly suited to adaptation for these instruments. I found the Philip Glass String Quartet No.3 especially memorable.



Modern Mandolin Quartet on stage Thursday  
Photo by Chris Swisher

At the two Open Mic noon-hour concerts our fellow attendees gave us a great variety of high-quality entertainment, from soloists to larger groups.

This year the pre-convention technical session was divided by instrument. Matt Flinner worked with the mandolinists, Dana Rath led the mandolas, Radim Zenkl the 'cellos, and Adam Roszkiewicz the guitars. At \$50, this 5½-hour group lesson is a great bargain!

Keith Harris also had a successful pre-convention seminar for a number of his online students.

The line-up of workshops represented a wealth of knowledge on many topics. Members of the host team and the MMQ gave the lion's share of workshops, along with the ever-popular Jim Bates, Mark and Beverly Davis, Keith Harris, Bob Margo, and composer-in-residence Neil Gladd. These sessions always open the door to new musical styles and new aspects of our craft.

For those of us who would rather play than sleep, Sue Lesser and Paul Beidler brought well-organized folders of music to sight-read, always lots of fun.

Our dear sight-reading leader, Toni Nigrelli, missed her first-ever convention while recovering from surgery. She was missed, and we wish her a good recovery.

Fred Pike and Katy Vandenberg, from the Milwaukee host team of next year's convention, were everywhere, making notes on how to give us a good time now that our expectations are so

high.

Now time will slow down again, while we look forward to the next annual CMSA reunion. See you in Milwaukee!

# 30th Annual Convention: Fellowship and Fun in Philadelphia

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Neil Gladd playing early mandolin recordings on antique player.  
Photo by Kelly Paul



Stephanie Schmidt was the lucky winner of the vintage Embergher, donated by Bob Margo (left). Jim Bates holds up the winning ticket.  
Photo courtesy of Jo Pellegrini



Five Composers in one place!  
L-R: John Goodin, Joel Hoobs (at back), James Kellaris (front), Owen Hartford, Neil Gladd



All eyes are on Jim Bates at En Masse rehearsal  
photo by Chris Swisher



Vendor array  
photo by Kelly Paul

# 'A Due': Mandolin Duets from Baroque to Modern

by Robert A. Margo

This is a report on the workshop I offered at CMSA Philadelphia on mandolin duets. The workshop discussed background considerations; original repertoire; transcriptions and arrangements; books, recordings, and videos; sources; and a brief list of recommended pieces to explore. Selected duets from different periods in mandolin history were also performed by attendees during the workshop.

## Background

Duets – mandolin plus something else – have been an important part of the literature for classical mandolin from the very beginning. In the workshop, I focused largely on original works for two mandolins, but also briefly discussed transcriptions and arrangements.

Mandolin duets are the simplest possible ensemble. For most CMSA members, it is probably easiest to find another mandolinist to play with, especially if one belongs to a mandolin orchestra. With the exception of teacher-student duets found in mandolin methods (see below) mandolin duets tend to have parts that are similar in difficulty, which may also make it easier to find a partner. The duet format may also have advantages from a performance perspective, because the repertoire is relatively unexplored (compared with, say, mandolin and guitar).

Mandolin duets offer an especially transparent way to develop ensemble skills, because there are only two players involved. Just as with classical guitar duets, the idea is to have the audience perceive one large instrument, played by four hands. To achieve this goal, ideal duo partners would have similar techniques, instruments, stringing and plectra – which may or may not be possible in the real world. As with all ensemble music, communication between players is key. One's first responsibility is to the ensemble; if duo partners communicate well, chances are good the performance will be successful.

## Baroque and Early Classical

The four-course Neapolitan mandolin first became popular in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Mandolin activity was concentrated in Paris, a center for music publishing at the time. Duets were evidently quite common and mostly intended for amateur performance.

The covers of published duets often indicate that the music was suitable for two mandolins, or two violins, or two flutes. Compared with music from the same period for solo mandolin and basso continuo, the published duets tend to be somewhat less idiomatically conceived – not surprising, since they were intended to be performable on a variety of instruments. The principal composers of duets from this period include Barbella, Corrette, Dingli, Gervasio, Leone, Riggieri, Ruge, Signorelli, and Sforgi di Pisa. Many duets can be found in eighteenth century methods, especially

Corrette and Leone.

Late in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the mandolin began a steep decline in popularity, but there was a minor revival in Vienna. The Beethoven pieces of mandolin and fortepiano date from this time, as do the various Mozart songs with mandolin accompaniment. Duets are (very) few and far between, but those that survive are of very high quality and also fairly demanding to perform. Examples are duets by Paolo Altieri and Johann (a.k.a. Giovanni) Hoffman.

## Romantic Period

In the first half of the nineteenth century the mandolin largely vanished from the concert stage in Europe, with only a handful of mandolinists continuing to perform. During the second half of the century, there was a revival, beginning first in Italy, the ancestral home of the instrument, and later spreading elsewhere in Europe and, eventually, to the New World. Numerous method books were written, and many of these used the duet format to teach basic skills. Although the duets in method books are certainly worth exploring, generally they are not suitable for concert performance, and have an added problem in that the parts may not be of equal difficulty.

Although there are some original works from the romantic period, it seems the most of the well-known (and not so well-known) composers from the mandolin's so-called "Golden Age" preferred to write for different instrumental combinations, or for solo mandolin. That said, there are excellent original works mostly of moderate difficulty by, among others, Raffaele Calace, Laurent Fantauzzi, Carlo Munier, and Silvio Ranieri.

## Contemporary

We live in a new "golden age" of mandolin composition. There are many excellent works, including duets.

Like much contemporary music in general, mandolin duets may be written with specific performers in mind. The language of contemporary music has expanded dramatically with the development of so-called "extended techniques" that use non-traditional means of sound expression. The mandolin is not immune to this, and there are many modern works featuring such techniques.

The mandolin duet format has been popular enough with contemporary composers that one can say there is a "canon". Opinions necessarily vary but in my opinion, the canon includes (in alphabetical order by composer last name): "Sonatine für zwei Mandolinen op. 59, Nr. 1" by Hans Gal, "Duos" by Theodor Hlouschek, "Railroad Song" by Yasuo Kuwahara, "3 Duos" by Takashi Ochi, and "Lark Song" by Eileen Packenham. Of these, the Ochi and Hlouschek works are accessible technically to intermediate level players, while the others require more advanced

# 'A Due': Mandolin Duets from Baroque to Modern

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skills, including extended techniques (Kuwahara). Other contemporary composers who have written mandolin duets that have proven to be popular with performers and audiences include Chris Acquavella, Alois Bröder, Philip Buttall, John Craton, Pedro Chomorro, Philip DeWalt, John Goodin, Eric t'Hart, Sebastian Paci, and Jose Antonio Zambrano, among many others.

## Transcriptions and Arrangements

The literature for mandolin includes many pieces originally written for other instruments. If the version for mandolin follows exactly or very closely the original – as is true, for example, of some works originally for violin – it is a transcription. If it deviates significantly, it is an arrangement. The distinction between a transcription and an arrangement is not a sharp divide but rather falls on a continuum.

One must take care in performing transcriptions and arrangements in public. A good rule of thumb is that unless the piece sounds reasonably good on the mandolin (it is very unlikely to sound better), think twice (or thrice) before playing it in public. "Sounds reasonably good" is from the vantage point of a knowledgeable listener, not the player.

Source material for plausible transcriptions and arrangements is vast. For example, much of the literature for renaissance lute is worth considering, because the lowest note on the lute is a nominal G, like the mandolin. Two-part keyboard music, common for virginals and harpsichord, is another possibility; the best-known example is the Bach Two-Part Inventions. There are innumerable flute and violin duets from the baroque era that, on the surface at least, are similar to the original mandolin duets from the period.

The Italian mandolinist Carlo Munier was especially fond of transcriptions and arrangements, and he made many of these, using source material from Beethoven, Carulli, Chopin, and many other well-known composers. Three volumes of Munier's arrangements were published as his "Utili Duetti" (see below). For public recitals, some of these may be in questionable taste, but for casual playing at home they are worth exploring.

## Books, Recordings, and Videos

There is no single book devoted to mandolin duets, but much relevant material can be found in James Tyler and Paul Sparks, *The Early Mandolin: The Mandolino and the Neapolitan Mandoline* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Paul Sparks, *The Classical Mandolin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Paul Sparks, *An Introduction to the Eighteenth-Century Repertoire of the Neapolitan Mandolin* (Kensington MD: Plucked String Inc. 1999, out of print). Recent recordings of mandolin

duets that can be recommended include Jacob Reuven and Alon Sariel, *Sources*; Shogo Miyatake and Michiko Kataoka, *Dialogue*; Takaaki Shibata and Christian Laier, *Sky Blue Flower*; and Duo Acquavella, *Gimo-Samling: 18<sup>th</sup> Century Sonatas and Trio Sonatas for Mandolin*. Any of the above (except for Sparks 1999) can be ordered from [www.trekel.de](http://www.trekel.de).

YouTube is a valuable source of videos for classical mandolinists, but it can be difficult and time-consuming to separate the wheat from the chaff. Here are a few recommendations of mandolin duet performances from YouTube (of these, the Marzé and Weyhofen is my favorite):

Sabine Marzé and Gertrud Weyhofen, "Suite Venezolana", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LaU9NHHkNS0>.  
Eugene Braig and Karl Wohlwend, Barbella "Sonata in G Major". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a53MMWlbi8>  
Elena Zabaskaya and Ekaterina Mochalova, "Railroad Song". [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o\\_Esivk3-2Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_Esivk3-2Q)  
Min Soon Park and Hye Jung Chen, Calace "Duet #1". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZhpKzYHDKNM>  
Chris Acquavella and Stefanie Acquavella-Rauch, "Wishes". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ngNT0Ij8BUM>

## Sources

For published scores, standard sources for mandolin duets are [www.trekel.de](http://www.trekel.de), [www.edition49.de](http://www.edition49.de), [www.astute-music.com](http://www.astute-music.com), [www.armelin.it](http://www.armelin.it), [www.productionsdoz.com](http://www.productionsdoz.com), [www.grenzland-verlag.de](http://www.grenzland-verlag.de). One can also find many mandolin duets at the public domain source [imslp.org](http://imslp.org); the specific link is [http://imslp.org/index.php?title=Category:For\\_2\\_mandolins&transclude=Template:Catintro](http://imslp.org/index.php?title=Category:For_2_mandolins&transclude=Template:Catintro), [www.mutopiaproject.org](http://www.mutopiaproject.org). IMSLP is also an excellent public domain source for violin, flute, and related duets as source material for transcriptions and arrangements for mandolin duets.

## Concluding Remarks

Ensembles are central to the classical mandolin. To become a better ensemble player, one must play regularly with other people.

Mandolin duets are the most basic of mandolin ensembles. The parts usually are similar in difficulty, making it easier to form an ensemble. There is a wide range of original repertoire from all periods of mandolin history, enough such that one could play a sample from all periods or specialize (for example, in baroque/early classical duets). Or grow your own, by transcribing or arranging from compatible source material. If you have questions about specific topics or pieces of music, feel free to contact me at [robert.a.margo@gmail.com](mailto:robert.a.margo@gmail.com).

My workshop concluded with a brief discussion of recommended repertoire, which is appended here.

# ‘A Due’: Mandolin Duets from Baroque to Modern

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## Selected Repertoire: Mandolin Duets

Composer	Title	Period	Difficulty	Source
Emanuele Barbella (ed. Rauch)	Sonata C-Dur, A-Dur, Duetto G-Dur	Baroque	Intermediate	<a href="http://www.trekel.de">www.trekel.de</a>
Gaetano Dingli	Sechs Sonaten	Baroque	Intermediate	<a href="http://www.trekel.de">www.trekel.de</a>
Giovanni Batista Gervasio (ed. Ochi)	3 Duos	Baroque	Intermediate	<a href="http://www.trekel.de">www.trekel.de</a>
W. Krumbach, ed.	Mandolin Duos from the 18 <sup>th</sup> Century, 2 v.	Baroque	Beg/Int	<a href="http://www.trekel.de">www.trekel.de</a>
Leone, ed. Le Roux	Duetti 1-6, 2 v.	Baroque	Int/Adv	<a href="http://www.trekel.de">www.trekel.de</a>
Antonie Riggieri	Duets, 2 v.	Baroque	Intermediate	<a href="http://www.trekel.de">www.trekel.de</a>
Paolo Altieri	Sei Sonate Per Due Mandolino	Classical	Int/Adv	<a href="http://www.armelin.it">www.armelin.it</a>
Raffaele Calace	Duetti, Op. 96-98	Romantic	Beg/Int	<a href="http://www.federmandolino.it">www.federmandolino.it</a>
Carlo Munier	3 duetti concertanti	Romantic	Int	Imslp.org
Carlo Munier	Utiles dulci (4 v.)	Romantic	Beg-Adv	Imslp.org
Silvio Ranieri	Variations on La Folia (in vol. 4 of L'art de la Mandoline)	Romantic	Adv	Imslp.org
Barbara Pommerenke-Steel	Mandolin Duos from around 1900	Romantic	Beg/Int	<a href="http://www.astute-music.com">www.astute-music.com</a>
Chris Acquavella	Wishes	Contemporary	Advanced	<a href="http://www.astute-music.com">www.astute-music.com</a>
John Craton	Six Pantomimes	Contemporary	Intermediate	<a href="http://www.craton.net">www.craton.net</a>
Hans Gal	Sonatine für zwei Mandolinen op. 59, Nr. 1	Contemporary	Advanced	<a href="http://www.trekel.de">www.trekel.de</a>
John Goodin	Midwestern Mandolin Duos	Contemporary	Beg/Int	<a href="http://www.mandotopia.com">www.mandotopia.com</a>
Theodor Hlouschek	Duos	Contemporary	Beg/Int	<a href="http://www.trekel.de">www.trekel.de</a>
Yasuo Kuwahara	Rail-Road Song	Contemporary	Advanced	<a href="http://www.trekel.de">www.trekel.de</a>
Takashi Ochi	3 Duos	Contemporary	Int/Adv	<a href="http://www.trekel.de">www.trekel.de</a>
Jose Antonio Zambrano	Suite Venezolana	Contemporary	Int/Adv	<a href="http://www.trekel.de">www.trekel.de</a>



# **CALL FOR NOMINATIONS**

## **To all CMSA members -**

The following three (3) Board of Directors' terms expire at the end of 2016:

- Lucille Bjerneby
- Kevin Metzger
- Dave Cohen

Our current by-laws state "The corporation shall be managed by the Board of Directors which shall consist of seven (7) members and the President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary as members ex officio." We are currently operating with 9 Directors. Your Board has decided to revert back to 7 Directors as stated in the by-laws.

Thus, we will be electing one (1) person to the Board of Directors this year. All Officers and Directors are elected for three (3) year terms. The newly elected Director will serve from 2017 to 2019.

The 2016 Nominating Committee consists of:

Lou Chouinard (Chair) 3925 30th Avenue South Minneapolis, MN 55406 L\_Chouinard@visi.com  
Susan McLaughlin 3064 Cameron Street Regina SK S4S 1W5, CANADA carpe\_plectrum@sasktel.net  
Sue Lesser 2339 Fairview Ave E, Slip O Seattle WA 98102 sulesser@gmail.com

To make a nomination, either –

- 1) Go to [www.ClassicalMandolinSociety.org](http://www.ClassicalMandolinSociety.org) where you will see a link to the online nomination process, or
- 2) Contact any member of the Nominating Committee, by e-mail or mail, with your nominations.

# Remembrances of Some Workshops I Attended

by Nick Royal

Back home reflecting about the convention, some of the workshops I attended stand out among the many activities, and have left me with things to continue working on.

## Dana Rath & the Mandola

Dana said that his principal instrument was the mandolin, but he had been asked to do the mandola workshop. He did say though that he had been playing the mandola off and on for some time, and he loved its mellow tone. He mentioned that the voice of the mandola was similar to that of the guitar. Dana played three or four pieces that he has written and performs on the mandola and they sounded lovely. In closing he played a movement from the Bach Cello Suite #3 – sort of what you would expect at a classical mandolin convention--sounded really nice. I think the workshop worked well for me and his playing inspired me to move beyond the mandolin.

## The Classical Guitar in Ensemble - with Beverly & Mark Davis

Although I wandered into this workshop thinking it would focus on guitar & mandolin, when I said that to Mark he said “just join us, Nick.” In Santa Cruz I play with a Classical Guitar Ensemble (15 guitars & one mando player—me), so I was sure I’d get something out of the workshop.

Mark gave us a handout of the topics to be discussed and the music we would play. The workshop started off with talking about various aspects of classical guitar playing: basic techniques, the subtleties, and what is involved in playing together.

Mark & Beverly then passed out four pieces, and they were pieces I could pretty much sight read right away (often not the case for me with the Mandolin Orchestra music). We played through the pieces and at some point I heard a voice joining the guitars and mandolin. It really added to the music we were making. The voice was Amely Guanipa’s, who is both a string player and a singer, but she didn’t have a guitar with her. Her voice really added to our playing!

After we had played the four pieces and Beverly and Mark talked about ways of approaching the music, it was near the end of the workshop time and he said, “Let’s just play all the pieces again,” which was really fun to do.

Before we left Mark said they would offer us an encore: they played “The Lass of Patey’s Mill,” a wonderfully lyrical piece. What a way to end the workshop! I plan to

share Mark’s notes and the music he gave us, with the guitar teacher of the ensemble I play with in Santa Cruz.

## The Solo Mandolin – Neil Gladd

This was really a session on how a composer approaches writing music. As with Beverly and Mark’s workshop, Neil handed out an outline of his presentation and pieces he has written. He then moved to playing the various pieces and talking about how they came about. Neil works with the U.S. Copyright Office at the Library of Congress, and I recall him saying he writes off and on around his day job. Sometimes, for example, he might not write something for a period of time and then he would get back to finishing a piece of music begun earlier.

The first pieces he played were Minuetto I & II from his Partita a Dodici Toni. They were written in a 12 Tone style of writing, the style of writing made famous by Arnold Schoenberg and others which involves using the 12 tones of a scale one after the other. (Should you be interested in this, check out an Internet article; that will explain the style of writing). At the bottom of the page was an elaborate chart which showed us how he actually constructed the two pieces.

Neil gave us the music to Prelude No. 1 in G minor and talked about how it worked. Then we all then played through it once.

I found much of his music abstract to my ear, but near the end of the session he talked about his piece, “Threnody,” written about September 11<sup>th</sup> in 2001. This was one of the most moving parts of the convention for me as everyone in the room remembered September 11<sup>th</sup>. He said that he could see the smoke from the Pentagon after the plane crashed into it, and later he found out there was to be another plane heading towards the White House—the one that went down in rural Pennsylvania. I moved my mind from abstract music to the scenes of September 11<sup>th</sup> as Neil talked. He then played “Threnody,” and I was transported to another time and place, as I think all of us in the room were.

The final piece he played was Variations on Arkansas Traveler, which both captured the feeling of the old-time fiddle tune, and showed what a composer can do with that wonderful melody. Hearing Neil both talk about his composing and playing his pieces was really interesting.

• • •

Those three workshops not only got me in touch with the music that was played, but also gave me a personal interaction with four performers at the convention.



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# Keith Harris Workshop



Keith Harris

A unique mandolin event took on the weekend prior to the CMSA Convention in Philadelphia this year. Keith Harris, the internationally-known Australian mandolinist who has been based in Germany for many years, held a 3-day workshop at the Wallingford Community Arts Center in Media, PA. The workshop, organized by Lucille Bjerneby, was attended by a number of Keith's current North American

Skype students, and others who were interested in gaining the benefit of Keith's exceptional insight into the instrument and awareness of the learning process. The ensemble's mandolin sound was rounded out by the presence of mandolas, guitar and double bass. Keith Harris is an exceptional educator and conductor. His attention to detail and precision certainly brought out the best in each musician!

Over the course of the three days, participants worked through Keith's reworking of Vivaldi's *Concerto in C*, his very moving *Tristesse*, and his arrangements of *Albumblatt* (a short piece by Wagner), and two pieces by Armin Kaufmann. Our soloists for the Harris/Vivaldi piece were Marina Eckhardt, a professional mandolinist from the Netherlands, and Bob Margo, whose accomplishments are well-known to us in the CMSA. (For more about Marina please visit [www.marinaeckhardt.nl](http://www.marinaeckhardt.nl).)

It was a special treat to have Marina and also Jacco Nijman, from the Netherlands, join us for this workshop. Marina and Jacco, who claim Keith as their teacher, provided coaching and valuable insights which the entire group truly appreciated, as well as brilliant examples of how well Keith's technical ideas work. Marina offered short evening sessions on tremolo and on proper technique for sanding down a German-style plectrum.



Gwen Bernardo, Adam Orr and Alice Derbyshire demonstrating Keith's exercise on coordination of left and right hand action.

The workshop ensemble had several opportunities to perform the pieces they had worked on. The first was at an afternoon fundraiser held at the Wallingford Community Arts Center. The ensemble next performed on the Wednesday during Convention Registration at the Radisson Valley Forge Hotel, and again at Saturday's Open Mic session. Audience response was warm and enthusiastic.

It's very likely that this workshop will be repeated next year. If you are interested in learning more about Keith Harris, his Skype lessons, or future workshop opportunities with him, you may contact him directly at: [keithharris@gmx.de](mailto:keithharris@gmx.de) or by visiting his website at [www.mandolin-lessons.com](http://www.mandolin-lessons.com).



Standing in Back Row: Linda O'Malia, Steve Clark, Margaret Swisher, Lucille Bjerneby, Jean Young, Alice Derbyshire, Gwen Bernardo, Marina Eckhardt  
Seated in Front Row: Susan McLaughlin, Kevin Metzger, Bob Margo, Keith David Harris, Adam Orr, Jacco Nijman



## Announcing CAMW 2017 – June 1-4 – in Milwaukee

The 17th annual Carlo Aonzo Mandolin Workshop (CAMW) will be held next year in Milwaukee, WI, June 1-4, 2017. We are delighted that Assistant Conductor Rene Izquierdo will once again join us.

The workshop consists of four days of mandolin orchestra rehearsal, with six hours of instruction each day. The last day includes a recital.

The music includes:

- Bach –Brandenburg Concerto #3
- Bach – The Art of the Fugue #1 and #12
- Vivaldi – Concerto in F major

Milwaukee is also planning a **mandolin mini-festival**, with concerts scheduled by:

- Carlo Aonzo and Rene Izquierdo
- the Don Stiernberg Trio
- Evan Marshall and Brian Oberlin

*“The best part of the workshop was playing beautiful mandolin orchestra pieces with dedicated people and with Carlo's direction.... It is a rare treat to hear classical mandolin playing of the caliber of Carlo. It is inspiring and expands our minds to the possibilities of the instrument, as well as being so very beautiful.”*

Full details and registration are available at:  
[www.carloaonzomandolinschool.com](http://www.carloaonzomandolinschool.com)

Registration is limited – don't miss out.



# Feature Review: The Mandolin Companion by Robert A. Margo

Feature Review: Alison Stephens and Chris Acquavella, *The Mandolin Companion for all styles and abilities*, [www.astute-music.com](http://www.astute-music.com)

Alison Stephens' untimely death in 2010 robbed the classical mandolin world of one of its brightest stars. In addition to her talents as a professional performer, Stephens excelled as a composer and as a tireless pedagogue. In 2002 Stephens became the mandolin editor for Astute Music, and several of her compositions were subsequently issued by this firm.

Stephens studied with the great English mandolinist Hugo D'Alton, and upon her graduation from Trinity College of Music, London she was appointed mandolin teacher at the college. Her program attracted excellent students, including the American mandolinist Chris Acquavella. After graduation, Acquavella moved back to the US where he set up shop in San Diego, establishing a highly regarded teaching studio and an international performing and recording career. In 2014, Acquavella moved to Germany to join his fiancé, now wife, Stefanie Rauch, herself an eminent classical mandolinist.

In the course of her teaching career Stephens assembled a large collection of exercises addressing various aspects of mandolin technique, which she honed through successive cohorts of students. Evidently her plan all along was to assemble these in a book, which unfortunately was not to be realized during her lifetime. Acquavella has taken up the task of completing the volume, which has now been issued by Astute Music as *The Mandolin Companion*.

By mandolin standards the book is moderately stout, topping out at 76 pages. It is spiral bound, and sits comfortably on the music stand. Production and print quality are excellent, and there is detailed text to accompany the various exercises.

The book is divided into twelve interrelated chapters. Chapters 1, 2, 8, 10, 11, and 12 focus mainly on right hand technique – for example, string crossing and arpeggio technique (Chapter 8), tremolo (Chapter 10), and artificial or “false” harmonics (Chapter 12). The remaining chapters focus mainly on left hand issues, such as scales (Chapters 3-4), improving dexterity (Chapter 6), positions (Chapter 7), and multiple stops (Chapter 9). The various exercises are graded *via* color codes – green for beginner, blue for intermediate, and red for advanced. The color coding is relative; the vast majority of exercises in the book require a good familiarity with mandolin technique and to perform some (for example, 9.24) at the red level necessitates very advanced skills, indeed. Several of the chapters contain excerpts from the mandolin literature illustrating the relevant technique (such as string crossings or duo style,

in Chapter 11) along with suggested further readings, both very useful additions.

I have personally played through the exercises in the book, and can attest that all are valuable. Especially good, in my opinion, are the warm up exercises in Chapters 1 and 2 for the right hand, and Chapter 5 for the left; the exercises in Chapter 8 on string crossings; the treatment of double stops in Chapter 9, quite demanding in spots; and the discussion of measured tremolo in Chapter 10, which includes an informative exercise on Kubota tremolo (10.6).<sup>1</sup> For more advanced players, Chapter 11, on duo-style/tremolo-staccato, is thorough despite its brevity; and Chapter 12's treatment of artificial harmonics demystifies a topic that many struggle with.

To complete a work left unfinished at the death of the original author is always a difficult task. Acquavella, of course, is a very strong professional player with a well-developed teaching philosophy of his own. That said, while there are places in the book where his contribution to the proceedings is obvious (such as exercise 10.7), he has tried hard (and succeeded admirably) in maintaining a consistency tone throughout that is recognizably Stephens.

As the authors stress repeatedly in the book, *The Mandolin Companion* is not a mandolin method and it cannot be used as such. Mandolin technique is a contentious subject; to her credit, Stephens had catholic (small “c”) tastes, using (and developing) what worked for her and her students regardless of the source, and discarding the rest. I recommend reading once through the book *sans* mandolin, to get the big picture and to decide which exercises to pursue first. In doing so, one should keep in mind that, even for advanced players, it will be fruitful to work each exercise at the green level for some time before progressing to the blue and red. Regardless of priorities, everyone can benefit straightaway by adopting the daily warm up exercises in Chapters 1,2 and 5.

*The Mandolin Companion* is available in hard copy for the current price of 15GBP (plus shipping) or 11.25GBP *via* immediate download (and no shipping) from <http://www.astute-music.com/shop/mandolin-mandolin-solo-the-mandolin-companion-p-532.html>. I highly recommend it to all mandolinists, without reservation.

(Endnotes)

1. This is a reference to Takashi Kubota, the Japanese composer/mandolinist who has made an exhaustive study of measured tremolo. Well known (and in wide use) in Japan, Kubota's methods are beginning to be diffused in the West.

# Orchestra News

## KALAMAZOO MANDOLIN & GUITAR ORCHESTRA

### Composition Contest Winner...

The Kalamazoo Mandolin & Guitar Orchestra has selected Chris Acquavella, as the winner of their 2016 composition contest. The KMGO will premiere the winning piece, "Four Melodies" on May 13, 2017. "Four Melodies" was selected from a pool of fifteen compositions. Entries were received from the United States, Germany, France, Italy, and Turkey. Congratulations Chris!

### KMGO hosts Chris Acquavella for Workshops and Concert

The KMGO had the pleasure of hosting Chris Acquavella for a wonderful weekend of workshops and a concert November 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. Saturday morning began with Chris coaching the orchestra through his compositions *Yutuma* and *Look into My Soul* (a concerto for solo mandolin and mandolin orchestra). Chris has the advantage of being not only a virtuoso mandolinist but also an excellent guitarist and bass player; these skills allow him to coach all sections extremely well. In the afternoon Chris gave a workshop on mandolin technique. He worked on many facets of technique using excerpts from his new book co-authored by Alison Stephens "The Mandolin Companion" (see preceding page for review). The weekend culminated with a Sunday afternoon concert which was filmed by our local PBS affiliate. Chris performed solo works on a modern instrument and a baroque mandolino. He later joined the orchestra to play his concerto *Look into My Soul* and to conduct *Yutuma*. Acquavella proved to be an excellent teacher, performer, and conductor. Chris brings a high level of virtuosity, enthusiasm, and energy to his workshops and concerts. For more information or to contact Chris Acquavella see <http://chrisacquavella.com/>.



The Kalamazoo Mandolin & Guitar Orchestra with Chris Acquavella (center) photo by John Hosley

### Carlo Aonzo Performs with the Atlanta Mandolin Orchestra

by: Eve Kuniansky



Left to right: Bob Knysz-Concertmaster, Robb Smith-Conductor, Scott Glazer, Nancy King, Walter Dean, Eve Kuniansky, Clark Brown, David DeLorme, CJ Buot, Carlo Aonzo-featured soloist, Barbara Knysz, Ed Davis, and Hugh Peterson

The Atlanta Mandolin Society presented a concert at the Callenwolde Fine Arts Center featuring Carlo Aonzo with the Atlanta Mandolin Orchestra conducted by Robb Smith. An enthusiastic crowd was treated to a wide ranging set from the AMO that included *The City Awakens* by E. Stople; *It Don't Mean a Thing* by D. Ellington, arr. By W.E. Davis; *Tango Infernal* by M. Kugler; *The North Georgia Hills* by J. Goodin; *Puttin' on the Ritz / Steppin Out with My Baby* by I. Berlin, arr. F. Hamilton; and *The Flying Wedge* by K. Dolby. After intermission mandolin maestro Carlo Aonzo with local bassist Scott Glazer thrilled the crowd with the following pieces from the recent Carlo Aonzo Trio album, *A Musical Journey*: *Polke* traditional, *Mazurka* by R. Calace, *Ali for Flying* by C. Aonzo, *Indifference* by L. Colombo and T. Murena, *Recita de Samba* by J. Do Bandolim, and *Splitting It Up* by Z.M. Bickford. Then to the delight of the audience, Carlo Aonzo was accompanied by the AMO on *Spring from the Four Seasons* by A. Vivaldi, *The Song of a Japanese Autumn* by Y. Kuwahara, and finished with *Concerto in C* by A. Vivaldi. The audience was spellbound by Carlo's solos with many hearing mandolin orchestra music for the first time. To see the Atlanta Mandolin Society performing *Spring from the Four Seasons* with Carlo Aonzo visit <https://youtu.be/5OKSqeProc>.

# First New York City International Mandolin Festival

by Anne Rivera

When Director Steven Antonelli and members of the NY Mandolin Ensemble (not to be confused with the NY Mandolin Orchestra) decided to host an International Mandolin Festival in New York, they had neither the venue nor the funding for such a project. Shortly after they first announced the event on Facebook in May 2015, however, applications from mandolinists who wanted to participate as performers began to arrive. Among those interested were mandolin virtuosi Caterina Lichtenberg and Mike Marshall, whose enthusiasm provided an impetus for the organizers.



*Caterina Lichtenberg and Mike Marshall  
Photo by Paul McGeary*

Antonelli obtained funding from interested individuals, including Mandolin Ensemble members, and from corporate sponsors -- like Alto Music, Northfield Mandolins, ArtistWorks and the Mandolin Café. He arranged for the Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, on Manhattans Upper East Side, to donate workshop and performance space; and plans began to jell.

The first-ever New York International Mandolin Festival took place during the weekend of July 15-17, 2016. Performers came from all over -- from Italy and Montreal, from India and New England, from the New York tri-state area and from Russia -- despite the fact that the organizers could offer only a small honorarium, rather than professional performance fees. Before and after each concert there was a brisk sale of CDs and books, with all proceeds going to the artists.

“Two factors helped us attract players,” Antonelli points out. “People wanted to perform in New York; and they were interested in being on the same bill as Caterina and Mike.”

Because they wanted to attract as many attendees as possible, the organizers charged a modest fee of only \$90 for the three-day event. They also provided complimentary tickets to NY Mandolin Orchestra

members, guests of the international performers, and others. Ninety people attended the first evening concert; by the end of the weekend there was standing-room only in the 140-seat auditorium.

Mandolinists on stage performed styles ranging from baroque, classical and romantic, to Bluegrass, folk, Choro, raga, and jazz. “Our goal in presenting the Festival,” Antonelli wrote for the program, “is to provide musicians an exceptional environment in which to express themselves, to share new compositions and arrangements for mandolin and plectrum groups, and to offer . . . our audience three days of amazing concerts, thrilling musical discovery, workshops and conversation.”

## For example:

Snehasish Mozumder, one of the few musicians in India who has mastered the art of raga on the mandolin, performed a mandolin version of North Indian classical music with Tabla player Ray Spiegel.

The Improvviso Quartet (two mandolins, an octave mandolin, and a guitar) from Savona, Italy, played a program consisting entirely of Italian music, both modern and historic (Calace, Munier) and one Gershwin number.



*Improvviso Quartet Photo by Paul McGeary*

Caterina Lichtenberg and Mike Marshall played a total of three concerts during the festival weekend. Their music ranged from the Baroque era (Bach) to modern Bluegrass and Choro renditions and original compositions by Marshall.

Jonathan Belanger and the Mando Montreal Orchestra, a quintet from Montreal, performed several original Belanger compositions as well as arrangements of



# First New York City International Mandolin Festival

(continued from page 16)

Vivaldi and other composers.

American mandolinist Barry Mitterhoff, a Bluegrass icon, invited Kenny Kosek (violin), and Joe Selly (guitar) to join him in a rousing trio.



Barry Mitterhoff, with Kenny Kosek (violin) and Joe Skelly (guitar).  
Photo by Paul McGeary

The “14 Strings Duo” -- mandolinist Tiziano Palladino and guitarist Isidoro Nugnes from Molise Italy --performed the lyrical “Recuerdos de la Alhambra” along with other Spanish selections and Italian classics.



14 Strings Photo by Paul McGeary

Russian-born Tamara Volskaya, a virtuoso on both the domra and the mandolin, with members of her Russian Trio -- Anatoliy Trofimov (bayan) and Leonid Bruk (balalaika-contrabass) -- presented a diverse program ranging from Russian folk melodies and the “Ukrainian Fantasy” by Holminov to excerpts from Vivaldi’s Concerto in d minor, Shostakovitch, and Gounod’s “Faust.”



Russian Trio Photo by Paul McGeary

## New Mandolin Music

NY Mandolin Ensemble hosts presented a concert of their own compositions and/or arrangements. The music included a traditional Breton dance, arranged by Antonelli; a Scarlatti sonata, arranged by Wayne Fugate; and “Gigolo” by Caesar/Brammer, arranged by Michael Sansonia. Also, “Stoughton’s Waltz” by Antonelli; “Three Keys” by Roy Goldberg; “Amadou” by Barry Kornhauser; “Philly Blues” by Rich Robinson; and other original works by Antonelli, Goldberg, and Robinson.

Also championing new mandolin music was the Davis Duo, composed of Mark Davis, conductor of the Providence Mandolin Orchestra, and classical guitarist Beverly Davis, orchestra president. Their program was entirely contemporary and featured music by Victor Kioulaphides, James Kellaris, and Simon Mayor.

Antonelli says that perhaps a future Festival could focus on original compositions for mandolin groups. “We might even hold a competition for composers and play winning compositions at the Festival” he suggests. “We want to continue the international emphasis, but we don’t want to create the same thing all over again.”

## Workshops Too

Morning workshops preceded the non-stop musical performances that started each afternoon at 2 pm and extended into the evening. Tamara Volskaya’s workshop on “The Joys and Challenges of Playing Mandolin Duets” featured performances by students and colleagues that illustrated different duet styles.

In his workshop Snehasish Mozumder demonstrated his adaptation of North Indian classical music to the

# First New York City International Mandolin Festival

(continued from page 17)

mandolin.

On Sunday morning, NY Mandolin Ensemble member Wayne Fugate talked about “Developing Effective Practice Techniques.” (“Best tip he gave was ...it is better to practice for 15 minutes daily than for two hours once or twice a week,” commented Andrew Blitzer, of the NY Mandolin Orchestra.)

Fugate was followed by Mike Marshall whose workshop “From Bluegrass to Bebop to Brazilian Choro” attracted many of the Festival performers, as did the final workshop, by Caterina Lichtenberg. She discussed “The Classical Mandolin: Tone Production, Right Hand Techniques, and a Look Into the History and Interpretation of Baroque, Classical and Romantic Mandolin Styles.”

## In C

On Sunday evening, following the last concert -- by Lichtenberg and Marshall, all Festival artists took part in a grand finale. In spite of their different backgrounds, styles, and nationalities, they produced a remarkable performance of “In C,” written in 1964 by American minimalist composer Terry Riley.

The music consists of 53 measures that are fragments of musical material and melodies. Performers move through the fragments at their own pace, with the option of repeating a measure, continuing to the next one, or jumping to one further on. The only requirement is to keep moving forward to a constant rhythmical beat.

“There was little or no rehearsal due to the nature of the piece,” commented Barry Mitterhoff. “It seemed like the timbre and plucked sound of the mandolins lent themselves well to the minimalist nature of the piece.” (There are no specific directions on which instruments to use.) “It was nice to have a piece that all the artists from the festival could play together,” Mitterhoff pointed out, “despite the diverse styles represented by the various performers.” He added that “It might have been more fun to perform than to listen to, but you’d have to get the opinions of the audience members to compare.”

Opinions of audience members ran the gamut. Guitarist Carlos Haase (NY Mandolin Orchestra) said he was “very moved” by the “mesmerizing” performance. “What made this . . . early minimalist composition even more fascinating,” he pointed out, “was being able to follow along with the music that was handed out to the audience.”

Others found that despite some “great moments,” the repetitive nature of “In C” was mostly monotonous.

Tamara Volskaya summed up the effect that performing “In C” had on her. “To be part of the ‘In C’ performance is like meditation,” she explained. “You are in an ocean of C major all around. Nothing can bother you!”

## Another Mandolin Festival in NY?

Antonelli says that the Festival fulfilled his artistic expectations; and he is pleased that it broke even financially, which is often not the case in the first year of a venture. “We are in the process of exploring alternate venues for the next event,” he notes, adding that all the participants have expressed a desire to take part in another Festival.

The workshops, while not the main focus, were a popular feature of the Festival, he observes. Several attendees commented that there should have been more workshops and more opportunities for workshop goers to play their instruments. Workshops will be more “hands-on” in the future, Antonelli says, adding that there will also be a place for players to lock up their instruments when they are not in use.

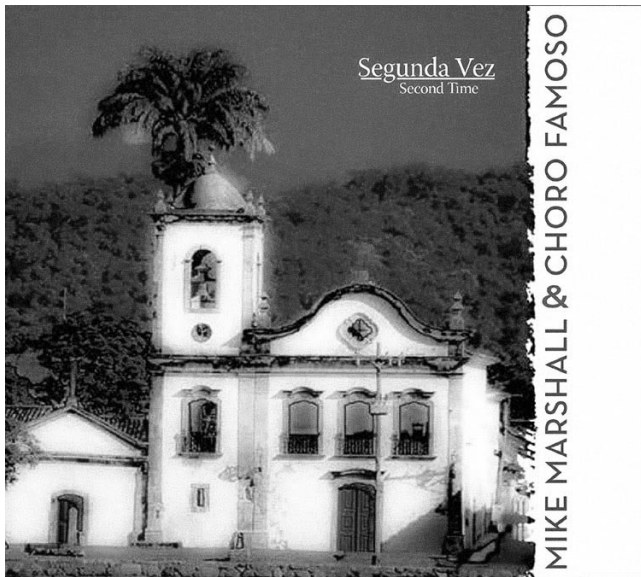
“Of course, we do not simply want to re-create the same program,” he emphasizes. We want to provide opportunities for additional international groups to perform in New York City.” Three groups from South America have already inquired about participating in the next festival, he notes.

The NY Mandolin Ensemble organizers are not daunted by “geo-political conditions in the world” that can cause problems for international events planners. For example, Antonelli says, a group of Belgian musicians who were scheduled to attend the Festival did not come because of problems obtaining visas; and terror attacks in Nice, France on the eve of the Festival worried some of the European performers.

“In such a world, there is nothing better than making music and art together. I am confident that a second festival will be held,” Antonelli promises. Organizers are currently in the process of seeking corporate donors related to the mandolin world and individuals who are interested in supporting the next Festival. “Whether it will be in one year, a year and one half, or two years will depend on the support we can confirm in the next months and on final fundraising,” according to Antonelli. (More information is available from [stevenantonelli@gmail.com](mailto:stevenantonelli@gmail.com)).

# Review: Mike Marshall and Choro Famoso

by Nick Royal



Review of Mike Marshall and Choro Famoso, "Segunda Vez," CD recording, Adventure Music, <http://mikemarshall.net/recordings/>

"Segunda Vez/Second Time" is a wonderful CD of Brazilian choro tunes which came out in 2014. The leader of the group, Mike Marshall, is on mandolin, with Andy Connell on clarinet, Colin Walker on 7 string guitar, and Brian Rice on pandeiro/percussion.

In the summer of 2012 Mike's choro group, "Choro Famoso," was performing the last night of the annual Mandolin Symposium, (held for 12 summers) in Santa Cruz, CA. The group played a slow beautiful tune and afterwards I asked Mike about it, and he said it was called "Paraiso," and was by the Brazilian composer and arranger, Moacir Santos. Mike told me that Santos had recorded it on his cd, "Choros e Alegrias" which I then bought. Mike later sent me the score to the tune, and said it was on their 2<sup>nd</sup> choro cd, "Segunda Vez," which I then bought.

It's a wonderful album: great tunes and really fine playing. I happen to favor the slower tunes, and I recommend: "Sensivel" by Pixinguinha; "Uma Noite no Sumare" by Orlando Silveira & Esmeraldinho Salles; and "Paraiso," by Santos.

Colin, playing a 7 string guitar, often uses it as a "bass instrument," playing a bass line for the tune. Mike is great on the pieces, using his Lloyd Loar F5 mandolin, versus the usual Brazilian style mandolin that one hears most often in choro music. Finally, the clarinet playing of Andy Connell is really good, and Andy wrote a wonderful set of notes for the recording. Those notes come from a MA thesis he wrote while studying music at the University of Michigan. I love to learn about composers, and performers, and the notes do an excellent job and add a lot to the CD.

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# A Spanish Mandolin Adventure: Festival Internacional de Plectro de la Rioja

by Barbara Conrad

Early in the years of Carlo Aonzo's Accademia, he formed an orchestra – Orchestra dell'Accademia Internazionale di Mandolino – made up of the Accademia instructors and some of the top students from Italy and Switzerland. They recorded a CD, *Mandolin Images*, and have played concerts over the last seven years, including a U.S. tour.

Some months ago, Carlo landed a gig for the orchestra as part of the concert series at the 45<sup>th</sup> edition of the Spanish plucked-string festival at Logroño, in the region of La Rioja in northern Spain, August 22 to 27. He invited some previous Accademia attendees to join the orchestra for the event. How could I miss out on this?

We received our music ahead of time. Unlike Carlo's other workshops, where we switch parts for some pieces, here we were assigned to either mandolin 1 or 2.

Our hour-and-a-half program was:

- Dino Berruti, *Danza di un piccolo fauno*
- Raffaele Calace, *Concerto in A minor: Largo Mesto* (Carlo playing the solo part)
- Claudio Mandonico, *Fantasia bulgara*
- Gianluca Fortino, *Malinconia e Danza*
- Carlo Chiddemi, *MandoLMambo*
- Katsumi Nagaoka, *Yume*
- Sebastian Paci, *Suite Campesina*
- Stefano Squarzina, *C.P.O. Rhapsody: Samba di Mezzanotte*
- (encore piece) Vincent Beer-Demander, *La Petit Bal des Bêtes*: first movement (Polka)

Our illustrious director was Gianluca Fortino, who leads the Swiss Gruppo Mandolinistico Eliante in Mendrisio, Ticino.

The orchestra assembled at Acqui Terme on Saturday afternoon, the day before this year's Accademia was to begin. We rehearsed from 3 p.m. to 10:30, with a break for dinner.

Sunday morning we met for another three hours, then had lunch and greeted those arriving for the Accademia. At 5:30, dressed in our black orchestra outfits, we carpooled to the location of our first concert, which officially opened the Accademia week, in a large, modern (and air-conditioned) church. After all our practice, we dazzled our audience.



Concert at opening of Accademia  
Photo: Alessio Concelletti

A memorable moment occurred at 7 p.m., just as we were between two pieces, when the church bells began ringing. Well, at 7 p.m. on Sunday evening, it seems they have a special, extended chime cycle. By the end, we were starting to try and pick out the melody on our instruments. I was so relieved that this interruption did not happen just after we began playing the soft, gentle opening of *Yume*, our next piece, which would have been destroyed.

After our excellent concert, we said farewell to Gianluca and those of our orchestra members not staying for the Accademia. We put away the music for Spain and switched over to the Accademia music for the rest of the week.

Fast forward to Monday of the next week. Our Spanish group of about 20 met at Malpensa airport (Milan) for our flight to Madrid. With all the instruments, our group had priority boarding. On arrival, after dealing with the non-arrival of one suitcase, we loaded onto our chartered bus for the four-hour drive north to Logroño. With no time to spare, the bus took us straight to the auditorium where we were to play the opening concert of the festival. We took all our bags and instruments backstage and pulled out music, stands, etc. for our sound check.



Opening concert of Festival, on arrival in Longrono  
Photo: Riojafoto

# A Spanish Mandolin Adventure: Festival Internacional de Plectro de la Rioja

(continued from page 20)

I, for one, played terribly, feeling scattered. It was a good warning, though, of how not to play at the concert. Then we unpacked our orchestra clothes and went to the dressing rooms. We just had time to change and have a snack, which the organizers had kindly provided, and then it was showtime. Gianluca helped us to focus and, while it was not our best concert, we managed to pull off a professional performance for the opening of the festival, in spite of our 12-hour journey.

That was the first of the three concerts we played.

Our hotel in Logroño was central, right next to the old town, which we enjoyed exploring. All the other festival musicians were staying there too, and chatting with them at meals was an added bonus.



*Group at section of ancient city wall, on sight-seeing tour of old town.*

*Photo: Barbara Conrad*

Also on the festival lineup were:

- New American Mandolin Ensemble (NAME), USA – Mark Davis’s group needs no introduction to this readership
- Duo Chitarrone: Vincent Beer-Demander (mandolin) and Gregory Morello (guitar), France
- Duo Resonance: Natalya Kravets (mandolin and domra) and Iana Povolskikh (guitar), Russia
- Trio Nuestra Herencia: brothers Felipe and Juan Peña (triple and bandola, respectively) and Ricardo Puerto (bass guitar), with the Peñas’ little brother, child prodigy Jesus Peña, Colombia
- Duo Espiral: Rosana Alfaro (mandolin) and Maria Abril (guitar), Spain



*French Duo Chitarrone*

*Photo: Riojafoto*

Each of the groups played two or three concerts, and we got to see most of the acts. These are at the highest levels of plucked-string mastery.

Some venues were out of town. For our second concert, on Wednesday evening, we had a half-hour bus ride to the town of Calahorra, where we played in a lovely old theater.

Our orchestra had a couple of practices in the week, which helped to fine-tune some problem areas, as well as playing some new material we did not perform.

Thursday was a free day. A number of us took the bus to the big city of Bilbao, about an hour and a half each way. My visit to the Guggenheim art museum there was a highlight of the trip.

Another highlight was an impromptu jam Friday evening. Most of the performers were there, either as players or audience.



*Musicians from all the groups, jamming together.*

*Photo: Barbara Conrad*

# A Spanish Mandolin Adventure: Festival Internacional de Plectro de la Rioja

(continued from page 21)

Our third concert, on Saturday, was outdoors in the courtyard of the music conservatory. This was a half-hour set, a reduced selection from the full program. The festival's main coordinator, Carlos Blanco Ruiz, a director of the cultural group responsible for the festival, La Asociación ConTrastes-Rioja, called this concert a "special moment" of the festival. His 11-year-old son, David, played percussion with us on *MandoLMambo*.

Señor Ruiz told me: "In this 45<sup>th</sup> festival, the personal quality of the participants has been above all. This positive attitude has created an atmosphere of friendship between musicians and organizers, resulting in personal satisfaction, which has been transmitted to the audience in their performances.... The remarkable musical quality of the participants marked a high point in the long history of the festival."



Natalya Kravets of Russian Duo Resonance  
Photo: Riojafoto



Columbian Trio Nuestra Herencia

Carlo Aonzo had this to say: "The whole thing was an amazing personal and musical experience. I am so happy we could include new, valuable players in the Accademia's Orchestra, giving them the opportunity to perform in an ensemble at a professional level. We'll possibly plan more of these experiences for our attendees in future Accademias."

Sunday we boarded the bus for the ride back to Madrid and the flight back to Milan and the return home to everyday life.

## For Sale: 1923 Gibson Mandobass

**My father, Herman von Bernewitz, had a great collection of Gibson Mandolins, Mandolas, Mandocellos and 3 Mandobasses.**

**I am now moving with my family to Australia, and would like to sell the 1923 Gibson Mandobass. There were only 200 Mandobasses made by Gibson. It is in wonderful, original condition, and we have found a soft case for it. If anyone in your orchestra is interested in buying it, please have them contact me through this email. Asking price is \$7000.**

**Heidi von Bernewitz**

**[heidivb@verizon.net](mailto:heidivb@verizon.net)**



# The NAME in Spain: Iberian Peninsula Tour 2016

by Mark M. Davis and Robert Margo

The New American Mandolin Ensemble (NAME) gave five concerts in the Iberian Peninsula this past August. Four concerts were in Spain and one in Portugal. NAME members are Bob Asprinio (double bass), Beverly Davis (classical guitar), Mark Davis (director, mandolin), Judy Handler (classical guitar), Mark Levesque (mandolin), and Robert Margo (liuto cantabile). Lee Breckenridge, Robert Margo's spouse, also traveled with the group. Formed in 2013 as a professional ensemble, NAME has performed in Germany, the Netherlands, New England and the mid-Atlantic states, and at CMSA's 2014 convention in Portland, Oregon.

Our first concert was in Gondomar, a suburb of the city of Porto, in northern Portugal. Wine aficionados will know Porto for its famous port wine cellars, located on the banks of the Douro River. We arrived in Porto a day before our concert, where we were met at the airport by our host António de Sousa Vieira, along with several members of his mandolin and guitar ensemble, the Orquestra Portuguesa de Guitarras e Bandolins. We were led to our hotel in the city of Maia, another suburb of Porto, and close to the airport. We exchanged gifts; Antonio's were copies of his group's excellent new CD, "Pleieades", featuring several recent works by Portuguese composers (a review is forthcoming in the CMSA *Journal* by Robert Margo). An outstanding classical mandolinist who studied with Juan-Carlos Muñoz in Luxembourg, de Sousa Vieira is highly energetic and entrepreneurial, and in short order he has put Porto on the map in the world of classical mandolin. Concerts in Portugal are not casual affairs – they require much advance planning in partnership with local government agencies. Antonio undertook the planning for our concert with great efficiency and good cheer, and was able to garner financial support from the local authorities, something that is very difficult to accomplish in the United States.

After a lovely group dinner with Antonio and two members of his group the next day, we proceeded to the concert hall at the Casa Branca de Gramido - a magnificent old mansion with tremendous views of the Douro River.



NAME in Gondomar.

Because our concert was on a Saturday evening in late August – traditionally, the height of vacation season in Europe – neither we nor Antonio were expecting much in the way of attendance – but to our surprise, the concert was 'standing-room-only'. Our all-contemporary program received a standing ovation and we had to play two encores – a first for NAME – before the audience would let us leave the stage.

The day after our concert we took the excellent light rail system to the center of Porto. Along with hordes of tourists we explored the city streets, eventually making our way to the port wine area, where we took a delightful and informative tour of the Ramos Pintos cellars complete with the obligatory wine tasting (delicious!).

The next day (Monday) our entourage flew to Madrid and then drove rental cars to Logroño, the capital city of the Rioja region, in northern Spain. Logroño is the home of one of oldest and most prestigious plucked string festivals, the "Festival Internacional de Plectro de la Rioja". Throughout its long history the Festival has featured a veritable who's-who of major performers and groups, including Carlo Aonzo, Pedro Chamorro, Keith Harris, Mair-Davis Duo, Yasuo Kuwahara, Caterina Lichtenberg, Ugo Orlandi, and many others. Performers at the Logroño festival are selected by the organizers from an international competition. Concurrently, there is also a competition for new compositions for plucked strings, in which three different U.S. composers have received prizes in recent years. We featured one of these prize-winning works, Owen Hartford's "Urban Sketches", on all of our Iberian concerts (see below for NAME's full program).

The Festival is currently directed by Carlos Blanco Ruiz, one of Spain's leading classical guitarists. Blanco Ruiz teaches at the conservatory in Logroño, and is also the music director of La Orden de la Terraza, a world-class plucked string ensemble that is based in the city. The group has issued several outstanding CDs, most recently "Aires De Mi Tierra" featuring classical and contemporary works by Spanish composers (a review is forthcoming in the CMSA *Journal*). Managing the festival is a huge undertaking but all ran like clockwork thanks to Carlos and his exceptionally able staff, drawn from the members of his group.

NAME performed three times for the Festival, and separately at a non-festival concert in the nearby village of Soto en Cameros. Our first Festival performance was held in the performance hall of the Museo Wurth – an impressive edifice containing a world-class collection of modern art.

# The NAME in Spain: Iberian Peninsula Tour 2016

(continued from page 23)



*NAME in Wurth Museo*

Our next performance was in the small mountain town of Soto en Cameros. Here we performed in a tiny, ancient chapel – the ‘hermita de la Virgine de Cortijo’ – perched on a hilltop and accessible only on foot. It was very well attended and the local audience was especially happy to hear the new arrangement of Mark Davis’s “Tema de Soto,” originally for solo guitar.



*NAME in G. de Berceo*



*Soto en Cameros*

NAME gave the final concert of the Festival in the Sala Gonzalo de Berceo - a lovely turn-of-the century chamber music hall. The concert was attended by all the participants of the Festival, and a rousing reception followed that lasted into the wee hours.

For this tour, NAME put together an international program of contemporary works:

Dances for the Mandolin and the Moon-Richard Charlton  
Urban Sketches- Owen Hartford

*Circuits – Underground –*

*Walk About – Fast Lane*

Dreamtime - Annette Kruisbrink

Song for My Father - Clarice Assad

Philoxenia\* - James Kellaris

Three Songs - Antonio Carlos Jobim, arr. R. Margo

*Garoto - Caminho de Pedra - Stone Flower*

Esortazione e Danza - Claudio Mandonico

Guitar soloist: Judy Handler

Yutuma - Christopher Acquavella

\*world premiere

Other pieces that we performed on this tour included “Homeward Bound” by Eden Macadam-Somer, Armin Kaufman’s “Burletta” and Mitoka Dragomirna” (arranged by Keith Harris), and “Tema de Soto” by Mark Davis.

Without question the major highlight for us was the premiere of a new piece dedicated to NAME by CMSA member James Kellaris, “Philoxenia” which means (in Greek) “love of the stranger.” The subtext is the hospitality shown by Greece towards the Syrian refugees. Musically, the piece features beautiful, catchy melodies and the complex, compound rhythms characteristic of Greek music. It was a big hit with our audiences. We were thrilled that the composer was able to attend the Festival and be present for our performances of this exciting new piece.



# The NAME in Spain: Iberian Peninsula Tour 2016

(continued from page 24)



James Kellaris and Mark Davis

The roster of international artists performing at the Festival was exceptional: Carlo Aonzo's Orchestra dell'Accademia Internazionale di Mandolino, several members of which were old friends (e.g. CMSA's Barbara Conrad); France's Duo Chitarrone (Vincent Beer-Demander, mandolin; Gregory

Morello, classical guitar); Trio Nuestra Herencia (Felipe Andres Sanchez Peña, Juan Pablo Sanchez Peña, Ricardo Martinez Puerto; and special guest Jesus Alejandro Sanchez Peña - a group specializing in the folk music of Colombia); Duo Espiral (Rosana Ascacibar Alfaro, bandurria and mandolin, and Maria Bastida Abril, classical guitar)— a Spanish mandolin/bandurria and guitar duo; Duo Resonance (Natalya Kravets, domra and mandolin; Iana Povolskikh, classical guitar- a domra and guitar duo from Novosibirsk (Siberia), Russia); and the New American Mandolin Ensemble.

Despite a tight schedule, one or more members of NAME were able to attend formal concerts by the other groups, except for the Colombian ensemble, whose striking (and authentic) arrangements of Colombian folk music we fortunately heard in a morning workshop for conservatory students also featuring NAME and Duo Resonance. There are too many highlights to recount, but among the special moments were the Academia's performance of a beautiful new piece, *Melancholia e Danza*, written by their conductor Gianluca Fortino. We were entranced by Duo Chittarone's performance of new (and very difficult) works by Vincent Beer-Demander and by their exquisite set of Piazzolla tangos. We were inspired by the incredible (no other word suffices) virtuosity of Duo Resonance in their Russian-inflected program. We were also impressed by Duo Espiral's very American-take on George Gershwin's iconic *Three Preludes* and by Rosana Ascacibar's moving performance of Yasuo Kuwahara's "A Dumb Door" for solo mandolin.

Following the conclusion of the Festival, NAME members drove to Madrid where, after a day of sight-seeing, we met

up with the great bandurria maestro Pedro Chamorro to exchange news and music, and share tapas and wine.



Pedro with Liuto.

International tours are a fundamental part of NAME's mission. The benefits to international musical understanding are obvious -- we hear music and performers that rarely, if ever, play in the US; and we share our style of plucked string music with a much greater audience. And it is such fun to travel together....



NAME at cafe after final concert.

Links:

See Carlos Blanco Ruiz's projects on his YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/carlosblancoruiz>  
About the Festival Internacional de Plectro de La Rioja: <http://www.plectrorioja.com/wordpress/>

Orquestra Portuguesa de Guitarras e Bandolins: <http://www.orquestra-bandolins.com/>

# Carlo Aonzo's 11th Annual Accademia Internazionale di Mandolino e Chitarra: The Biggest One Yet

by Barbara Conrad



Over fifty enthusiastic mandolinists, mandolists and guitarists converged on Acqui Terme, in the Piemonte region of northern Italy, for a week of mandolin immersion, August 14 to 21.

This year's line-up of instructors were, for mandolin: Carlo, Piero Lisci (Milan), Michele De Martino (Naples), Sabine Spath (from Germany, now living in Liguria), and Steffen Trekel (Hamburg). Guitarists had three instructors: Michael Troester (Germany), Katsumi Nagaoka (Japanese, long-time resident of Genoa), and Roberto Margaritella (Piemonte).

While the guitar has always been an important element, this year it was officially added to the full name of the



Roberto and Michael with guitar group.

Accademia. And it lived up to the "Internazionale" part, with attendees coming from Australia and New Zealand, Korea, the U.S. and Canada, England, Scotland and Wales, France, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Italy.

Our daily schedule included rehearsals of the full orchestra to work on concert pieces that were sent out ahead of time, as well as some sectional sessions. Mandolinists were divided into two groups and parts were assigned so that each played Mandolin 1 for half of

the pieces and Mandolin 2 for the rest.

The program consisted of:

- Georg Philipp Telemann, *Suite D-Dur*, No.6 (three movements)
- Sylvain Dagosto, *Kourienka: Russian fantasy on traditional airs*
- Bruno Szordikowski, *Planxty O'Carolan: Irish suite for plucked-string orchestra*
- Claudio Mandonico, *Music for Play* (three movements)
- Vittorio Cerrai, *Suite Senese* (three movements)

Each piece was conducted by a different instructor.

Players were divided into four groups: two intermediate and one advanced for mandolin and mandola players, and one for guitarists. These groups each worked with an instructor to prepare ensemble pieces for the final concert, as well as having workshops together.



Carlo leading rehearsal.

Workshops were well planned and tailored to the group's level. In Steffen's session, he gave us exercises and

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# Carlo Aonzo's 11th Annual Accademia Internazionale di Mandolino e Chitarra: The Biggest One Yet

*(continued from page 26)*

technique to work on tone quality. Some of the exercises were in the form of three-part harmony, sounding good while doing the drills.

Carlo's workshop was about jazz chord progressions, a useful introduction to the subject for us non-chord-playing types, starting at square one. Surprisingly, he got us all playing scales of chords.

Michele's session was about how to approach a new piece of music to study. He handed out a Bach giga, and it did help that most of us knew how it sounded, even if we had never played it before.



*Michele's workshop.*

The daily schedule provided, as well as plenty of playing, a variety of other activities, long meal breaks and free time for individual study or whatever you liked. An interesting and popular optional activity was the daily tai chi classes led by Michael Troester, who is a master of the art.



*A noon hour tai chi group.*

Every evening had something in the after-dinner time slot. Steffen gave a presentation, "Using the energy flow for musicians," about reducing blockages to make playing relaxed. Michael assisted him, showing how some of the tai chi principles apply to our playing postures.



*Luthier Lorenzo Lippi's presentation.*

For our other evening presentation, our guest speaker was Milan luthier Lorenzo Lippi, who spoke about the history of the mandolin and answered questions about construction

and sound quality. He brought a lot of lovely instruments, old and new, to admire.

An evening outdoor concert featured a northern Italian group, Cisalpipers, playing rocking Celtic-inspired music, much of it original.



*Cisalpipers rock the outdoor stage.*

Thursday afternoon our whole gang piled onto a chartered bus for an excursion. We stopped for sight-seeing at two castles, the second of which has its own vineyards and wine production – and wine tasting. We ended up in the town of Molare for a tour of a historic palazzo, followed by dinner, then a concert by the Carlo Aonzo trio in the courtyard of the palazzo.

Friday night was the instructors' public concert, in the courtyard of a church complex, a delightful setting on a balmy summer evening. We heard several combinations of our instructors as duos, and finally all together for

# Carlo Aonzo's 11th Annual Accademia Internazionale di Mandolino e Chitarra: The Biggest One Yet

(continued from page 27)

their grand finale and a couple of encores.



*Instructors all together for concert finale.*

Saturday was devoted to the last rehearsals of ensembles and orchestra for our final concert. With rain in the forecast, Plan B went into effect. Instead of playing in the hotel courtyard, we rearranged our rehearsal hall to squeeze the orchestra at one end, with some chairs for an audience, with the rest of the chairs in the sheltered arcade outside our room. And after all that, it did start to rain just before the concert, so our audience was quite understanding about the unusual seating arrangements.

After the concert we had our final dinner, then the presentation of diplomas, and a jam session into the early hours.

And then it was Sunday, the time of packing up, final hugs and farewells. Many of us would be meeting again very soon for our Spanish adventure (see story page 20).

Since a year is a long time between Accademias, this winter Carlo is inaugurating a new, shorter version in Italy, to be held January 5 to 8.



*Final concert.*

Plans are underway for next year's Accademia, August 20 to 27, most likely in the same location again. I don't know how Carlo will be able to improve on this one, but each year he does find some new ingredients to make each Accademia a unique experience. Go to [www.accademiamandolino.com](http://www.accademiamandolino.com) for more photos from this year, and details, as they are known, for the upcoming editions.



*Sight-seers enjoy the view after castle visit.*

**DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS TO THE NEXT JOURNAL IS  
JANUARY 7th  
PLEASE SEND SUBMISSIONS TO: [CMSAJournal@gmail.com](mailto:CMSAJournal@gmail.com)**

# Feature Review:

## Sebastiaan de Grebber, “La Voce del Mandolino”

by Robert A. Margo

Sebastiaan de Grebber, “La voce del Mandolino,” CD recording, [www.degrebber-mandolin.com](http://www.degrebber-mandolin.com)

By any metric, Sebastiaan de Grebber is one of the leading performers on classical mandolin in the world. I reviewed his first CD recording of solo mandolin, “Fantasia Romantica”, previously in the *CMSA Journal*. “La voce” is his second solo recording.

The centerpiece comes first, Victor Kioulaphides epic – no other word will do -- “Sweelinck Variations,” written for de Grebber. Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck was active as a composer and keyboardist in the Netherlands in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Sweelinck evidently lived in the same Amsterdam neighborhood as lutenist Nicholas Vallet in Amsterdam, and much of his keyboard music is suffused with the lute. The Kioulaphides piece is based on the theme that Sweelinck used for his well-known piece “Mein junges Leben hat ein End”. The “Sweelinck Variations” is one of the most difficult works in the repertoire for solo classical mandolin, but de Grebber’s performance, dark and dramatic, makes it seem like a walk in the park.

The spotty history of Bach on the (solo) mandolin dates to the early twentieth century. On his first CD, de Grebber played the entirety of BWV1001; on “La voce” he essays just the prelude to BWV1006. Many mandolinists have a tendency to speed up through this particular piece but de Grebber takes his time, giving each note receiving its proper rhythmic due, allowing the majesty of the music to unfold naturally in all of its glory.

The late Alison Stephens was a familiar name to CMSA members and her untimely death an enormous loss to the world of classical mandolin. Victor Kioulaphides wrote his “Suite for Ali” for Stephens, and fortunately she was able to perform it before her passing. Written originally for (GDAE) mandola, it is frequently played on mandolin, as it is by de Grebber. The performance is highly emotional and very affecting, particularly the “Sarabande” which receives a hushed, reverent reading from de Grebber.

Demetrius Dounis was one of the great characters in the history of classical mandolin. Trained as a medical doctor as well as a violinist and mandolinist, Dounis came to the attention of Raffaele Calace after winning a mandolin competition in Cremona. Calace dedicated his Prelude #2 to Dounis, and Dounis made the very first recording

of any of the preludes, #1, in 1911.<sup>1</sup> Dounis emigrated to the US whereupon he settled in Manhattan, living with his brother Anton. Adopting Anton’s name as an alias, Dounis concertized on mandolin in the United States and Europe, specializing in arrangements of virtuoso solo violin works. Sometime in the 1930s Dounis seems to have retired from the mandolin to focus instead on the violin pedagogy for which he is best known today. Dedicated to Calace’s daughter Maria, “Reve Oriental” is one of about a dozen pieces that Dounis wrote for mandolin. This is not music meant to be rendered exactly as on the page, and de Grebber pulls out all of the stops (and then some). Ditto his bravura, hyper-virtuosic performance of Giovanni Giovale’s “Fantasia ‘Chi me frena’ dall’ aria di Lucia de Lammermoor di Gaetano D. M. Donizetti,” an Italian super-party piece if there ever was one.

A Calace prelude or two is practically a requirement on a solo classical mandolin CD these days, and de Grebber offers two, #10 and the *Gran Preludio*. I have a preference for German performers in this repertoire, especially Gertrud Weyhofen, but de Grebber’s exciting versions are definitely world-class.

Being out of Alex Timmerman’s Het Consort shop, de Grebber favors Embergher mandolins and the extremely long (6.5mm) Ranieri-style plectrum. The classic Embergher sound – bright, to say the least – can be an acquired taste, particularly for American ears attuned to Loars and the like. A touch of reverb and judicious microphone placement makes the sound on “La voce” warm and inviting, allowing the resonance of de Grebber’s 1938 instrument to shine through naturally.

An absolute must for anyone contemplating the performance of either Kioulaphides work, “La Voce del Mandolino” is very highly recommended to all lovers of solo classical mandolin. Hard copies of the CD may be ordered through de Grebber’s website ([www.degrebber-mandolin.com](http://www.degrebber-mandolin.com)) and also downloaded from cdbaby ([www.cdbaby.com/cd/sebastiaandegrebber](http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/sebastiaandegrebber)) as well as Apple iTunes, Spotify, Google Music Store, among other on-line sources.

(Endnotes)

1 The Dounis recording may be heard on-line at <http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu/search.php?queryType=@attr+1=1020&num=1&start=1&query=cylinder7060>.

## Feature Review: Japanese CDs and Sheet Music from Ikegaku by Robert A. Margo

The classical mandolin arrived in Japan in the late nineteenth century. Interest built slowly at first, but there was a considerable boost following a highly successful visit by Raffaele Calace in the mid-1920s. Interrupted by the World War Two, growth resumed in the 1950s. Today, there are numerous classical mandolin ensembles of one kind or the other in Japan, and thousands of players, along with a homegrown industry of instruments, recordings, DVDs, sheet music, and accessories

The language barrier makes it difficult for most Westerners to keep tabs on Japanese mandolin culture.<sup>1</sup> The advent of YouTube has helped somewhat by making amateur and professional performances accessible online. Several of the most important players and composers are known to Western audiences, either through immigration or regular trips to Western Europe (for example, Takashi Ochi) or having established commercial relationships with various Western publishers, such as Trekel (for example, Yoshinao Koyabashi) or Vogt & Fritz (for example, Yasuo Kuwahara, Jiri Nakano).

There are also music shops in Japan specializing in classical mandolin, a retail network that would make Western mandolin enthusiasts – except, perhaps, those in close physical proximity to the Trekel retail establishment in Hamburg, Germany – green with envy. One of the most important shops is Ikegaku, in the Toshima district of Tokyo. Ikegaku has a FB page and a commercial webpage (<http://www.ikegaku.co.jp/>) primarily in Japanese. With enough time and grit one can, sort of, navigate the internet shopping portion of the website (<http://www.ikegaku.co.jp/shopping/>) thereby locating interesting items. But ordering from the US without a fluent Japanese friend at one's side is effectively impossible, certainly for me.

Recently, a friend of mine visited Tokyo for an academic conference. She had some down time, and I persuaded her *via* email to attempt a visit to Ikegaku. Armed with the street address and accompanied by several colleagues (one of whom was Chinese and who could make out Japanese characters) the entourage took the subway from my friend's hotel, exiting at the allegedly proper stop near Japan's National Theatre. After about 45 minutes of fruitless wandering through nearby streets, one member of the group spotted Ikegaku's sign at its second story location.

Before venturing forth my friend naturally asked me what I wanted. Some items on the Ikegaku website -- CDs, for example, are costlier than in the West.<sup>2</sup> I also did not want to burden her with too much merchandise to bring through US customs. I settled on two CDs and one

piece of sheet music. The purchases duly made, I eagerly (and gratefully) picked them up after my friend returned to the US. I was very pleased with my purchases and offer some brief thoughts.

**Takayuki Ishimura, "Sarabande e Fuga," CD recording, Fauem Music Corporation, [http://www.ikegaku.co.jp/shopping/products/detail.php?product\\_id=626](http://www.ikegaku.co.jp/shopping/products/detail.php?product_id=626)**



Takayuki Ishimura is one of Japan's leading classical mandolinists. As far as I know, none of his CDs are available in the West, but several YouTube performances attest to a commanding technique and musicianship on both mandolin and liuto cantabile. Although Ishimura has performed his fair share of contemporary music, he seems to specialize in the Romantic repertoire. I have long coveted a copy of his CD "Sarabande e Fuga" because the title refers to an extraordinary early twentieth century composition by the Italian violinist and composer, Giuseppe Sirlen Milanese. Well-known in Italy at the time, Milanese served on the jury for a solo mandolin competition held in Milan in 1920, along with Raffaele Calace. The winner of the competition was the Belgian mandolinist, Frans de Groodt, who went on to be a leading performer and pedagogue in his country. After de Groodt's victory, Calace dedicated one of his Preludes (No. 10) to him, and Milanese followed suit with his "Sarabande e Fuga". Clearly modeled on the Bach solo violin music, the "Fuga" movement is far more difficult than anything else of its era, including the Calace preludes. I harbor an ambition to perform it, but so far have fallen short in my attempts to master the piece.<sup>3</sup>

To my knowledge, the "Sarabande e Fuga" has never been recorded in the West.<sup>4</sup> I can report that Ishimura does an excellent job. One can tell that the piece is at the very limits of his technical skill but all of the notes

## Feature Review: Japanese CDs and Sheet Music from Ikegaku

(continued from page 30)

are present, in their proper place, and the whole all sounds great. While I can imagine a better rendering in theory, if this were the only recording ever made, it would serve admirably as a reference. In addition, there are performances of six other Milanese works for solo mandolin, all of which are on the far side of difficult but not in the same league as the “Sarabande e Fuga”. Ishimura makes a compelling case for including this music in the canon of concert works for solo mandolin, particularly the very exciting and rhythmic “Studio Scherzo in Re minore”.

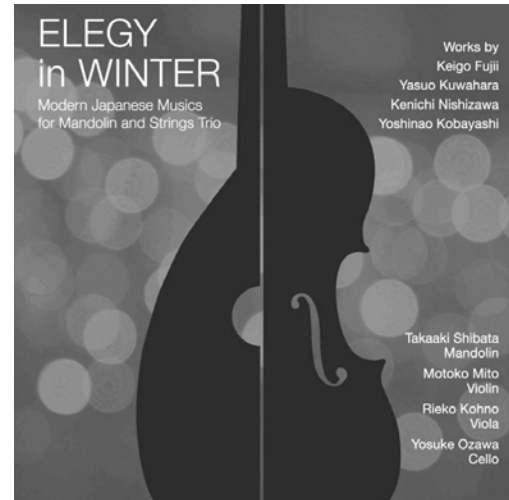
The CD also includes five iconic works by the Japanese composer Jiri Nakano. These are well-known in the West, having been published by Vogt & Fritz and recorded by Gertrud Tröster (Weyhofen) on her all-Nakano CD, and also by other classical mandolinists over the years. All of the German performances have been on Seiffert-style mandolins, whereas Ishimura uses Italian instruments, a 1974 Percoraro (presumably, in the Embergher style) and a restored 1894 Vinaccia. Nakano channeled his compositional muse through early twentieth century romantic Italian models, and the use of an Italian instrument makes the link front and center. The Nakano pieces are impeccably realized, elegant and stylish, and entirely convincing. The disc is rounded out with beautiful performances of five other pieces by various composers, including Fantauzzi’s scordatura work, “Crepescule”; and two lovely, and very, Italian pieces by Costantino Bertucci.

**Takaaki Shibata, “Elegy in Winter: Modern Japanese Musics [sic] for Mandolin and String Trio,” CD recording, Woodnote WNCN-1011, [http://www.ikegaku.co.jp/shopping/products/detail.php?product\\_id=778](http://www.ikegaku.co.jp/shopping/products/detail.php?product_id=778)**

Takaaki Shibata is not unfamiliar to Western classical mandolin aficionados, having studied and also recorded in Germany. Unlike most Japanese concert performers, he favors the German-style bowl back, strung (presumably) with flat wound strings and plucked with a Wolle plectrum.

“Elegy in Winter” is unusual for a mandolin CD in that all of the pieces are for mandolin and (conventional) string trio – violin (Motoko Mito), viola (Rieko Kohno), and cello (Yosuke Ozawa). There are four works on the recording – the “Astronam Quartet” by Kiego Fujii, “Elegy in Winter” by Yasuo Kuwahara, “Concertino per Mandolino e trio d’archi op. 78” by Kenichi Nishizawa, and “Quartet for Mandolin, Violin, and Violoncello” by Yoshinao Koyabashi. Kuwahara and Koyabashi are well known in the West for their mandolin compositions (I had not heard of Nishizawa until listening to this CD) and the

scores of both their pieces can be obtained from Trekel. Fujii has also made a reputation in the West for his large-scale works for classical guitar (especially, his piece “The Legend of Hagomoro”) and he is beginning to become well known to classical mandolin audiences, having written (and published) several pieces for mandolin and guitar,



one of which was dedicated to Steffen Trekel and Michael Tröster (“Sonata” for mandolin and guitar, published by Trekel).<sup>5</sup>

Compositionally, all of the works on the CD fall into the category of contemporary classical, although nothing is all that high up on the avant-garde scale (the Kuwahara and, especially, the Koyabashi, a bit more). The performances and production quality are superb throughout, and there is a seriousness of purpose to the whole enterprise that is bracing and inspirational.

**Daigo Marumoto, “Azzuro” for solo mandolin, [http://www.ikegaku.co.jp/shopping/products/detail.php?product\\_id=1459](http://www.ikegaku.co.jp/shopping/products/detail.php?product_id=1459)**

Daigo Marumoto is one of Japan’s leading composers for classical mandolin. His style varies from piece to piece, but could mostly be described as New Age. None of his pieces, as far as I know, are available from the standard Western outlets.

I have been eager to get a copy of “Azzuro” for quite a while, as it is a very popular work in Japan, judging by the number of YouTube performances.<sup>6</sup> It definitely falls into the New Age category – the harmonies are jazzy but easy on the ear; the textures, classic Windham Hill. The piece makes extensive use of right hand arpeggios and several other standard mandolin devices, including duo style and split strings. On the Trekel difficulty scale (1-5, with 5 being the most difficult) I would rate it at around a 4. The piece is divided into

(continued on page 32)

# Feature Review: Japanese CDs and Sheet Music from Ikegaku



three sections. Mm. 1-75 introduces the main thematic elements; this is followed by a middle section (mm. 76-143) in a (wide) rubato duo style. The arpeggio material returns for about 60 measures, and the piece closes with the same two chords that it opens with. I can imagine programming it (and expect do so) either in the main body of a concert (probably in the second half) or as an encore. There are a few passages that require some careful fingering but for

the most part the piece plays itself. Production quality is excellent, with a beautiful graphic design on the cover.

## Concluding Thoughts

The Ikegaku website is vast; my three little purchases don't even scratch the surface. The Western classical mandolin world in general and the US in particular, would be better off if there were transparent commercial ties to Ikegaku and the other Japanese shops. Accomplishing this will take a village. If you are a CMSA member who is fluent in Japanese, please get in touch; perhaps we can make progress together.<sup>7</sup>

(Endnotes)

1 As best as I can tell, the website of the relevant umbrella organization, the Japan Mandolin Union (<http://japanmandolinunion.jp/>) is entirely in Japanese.

2 For example, Ikegaku's website lists Duo Trekel-Tröster's CD "Dedication" at 3,000Y, around \$30USD at the exchange rate of early August 2016, before shipping (from Japan, which itself is expensive). A new copy of the same can be purchased from Amazon US for about \$17USD, again before shipping.

3 The New American Mandolin Ensemble (NAME) played a joint concert with HET Consort in Amsterdam in May 2014. At a post-concert dinner HET Consort member Ferdinand Binnendijk, who can play any of the standard mandolin repertoire and then some, told me he had studied the score of the Milanese piece and concluded it was unplayable.

4 The liner notes to the Ishimura CD include a photograph of the cover page of the original publication of the "Sarabande e Fuga", with the dedication to de Groodt prominently displayed at the top. The Milanese piece received first prize in a composition contest in 1922.

5 Trekel-Tröster performed an excerpt from this work at one of their concerts at CMSA Portland.

6 An excellent live performance of the solo version of "Azzurro" by Masataka Hori, one of Japan's leading professional players, may be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2AuLkH3GNNc>. Marumoto also has an ensemble piece entitled "Azzurro"; the solo piece draws on some elements of the ensemble work.

7 My email address is [robert.a.margo@gmail.com](mailto:robert.a.margo@gmail.com).

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Arr. E. Tiffany-Castiglioni

Traditional New England

The musical score is arranged in four systems, each with three staves: Melody, Descant, and Harmony. The key signature is D Major (two sharps) and the time signature is 6/8. Chord symbols are placed above the corresponding measures.

- System 1:** Melody, Descant, and Harmony. Chords: D, A7, D, A7.
- System 2:** Mel. (Melody), Desc. (Descant), Har. (Harmony). Chords: D, A7, D, A7, D/A, D. Measure 5 is marked with a '5'.
- System 3:** Mel. (Melody), Desc. (Descant), Har. (Harmony). Chords: A7, D, G, E7, A7. Measure 9 is marked with a '9'. An asterisk (\*) is placed above the second measure of this system.
- System 4:** Mel. (Melody), Desc. (Descant), Har. (Harmony). Chords: A7, D, A7, 1. D/A D, 2. D/A D. Measure 13 is marked with a '13'. An asterisk (\*) is placed above the second measure of this system.

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# Mandolin Orchestras - North America

The following orchestras have registered with the CMSA

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To be added to this list contact Mandolin Journal editor Jackie Zito at [cmsajournal@gmail.com](mailto:cmsajournal@gmail.com)

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