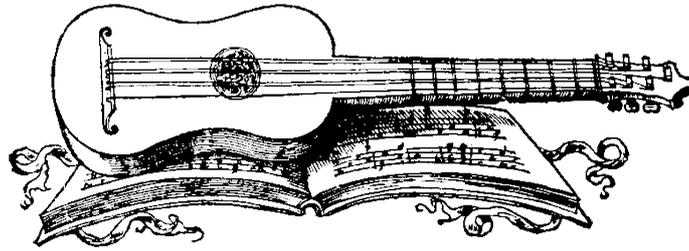


Dorset Guitar Society

Newsletter



Feb. 2011

Xuefei Yang - concert at Kinson

At Kinson Community Centre on 5th February we discovered why **Xuefei Yang**, born in Beijing and now based in the UK, is acclaimed as one of the world's finest classical guitarists. More than that, she charmed the audience of 114 from the outset as she spoke about the pieces, and it's no surprise to hear that Margaret found Xuefei (and husband Neil) to be lovely, friendly, helpful and unassuming during their stay in Dorset. It was noticeable how all the music she played had some particular significance for her, and her obvious love for it and need to communicate it added an extra atmosphere to the performance.

Beyond her captivating facility with the instrument (which I hope I can take as read, to save this reviewer from superlative exhaustion!) she is, of course, a remarkable musician and musical pioneer. Most of the pieces were her own transcriptions, and she is clearly passionate about expanding the guitar repertoire, and also arranging Chinese music for the instrument.

She began by performing from her transcription of the four movements of **JS Bach's Violin Sonata No. 2**, saying that it suits the guitar because Bach "made the violin polyphonic" and also arranged the work himself for the lute. She then introduced her version of **Suite Espana, op 165**, a lesser known work by **Albeniz**. Her virtuosic playing of the six Spanish styles made a strong case for it to be

considered "the equal of his other more familiar works", as she described it.

Before playing **Variations on a Theme from the Bellini opera, I Capuletti e i Montecchi**, she told us its composer **Giulio Regondi** (1822-1872) was an Italian guitar virtuoso, 'the Paganini of the guitar', and that this piece was discovered in the 1990s and considered impossible to play. Next we heard **Invocation and Dance by Joaquín Rodrigo**, a special piece for Xuefei because when she first performed it, which seems to have been at the age of only 14 in Madrid, she remembers being very nervous on realising that the composer (who would have been in his nineties) was in the audience, and recalls shaking hands with him.

Xuefei's playing of Smallman guitars (among many others) dates back to the early 1990s, when her playing so impressed John Williams that he gave two of his own to her Conservatory in Beijing. The clear, strong sound of her current Smallman allowed every note and musical detail to be savoured even at the back of the hall. (She has been quoted as saying that, though Smallman guitars are known to be loud, what she loves is the way they sustain the sound so well while producing a warm and rich tone).

As it was the third day of the Chinese New Year, she played two Chinese pieces. An arrangement from a much longer Concerto by **He Zhanhao**

and **Chen Gan, Butterfly Lovers**, built up to fluttering pentatonic flourishes before finishing quietly to represent

the reluctant parting of the lovers. The other piece from her native country (an encore) was her arrangement of a folk song she used to sing as a child, **Plum Blossom in Snow**. The second encore was **Recuerdos de la Alhambra** by Tárrega - such was her care over dynamics and rubato that I know some of us heard this very familiar piece with new ears.

Perhaps the highlight for me was the second of two waltzes by Xuefei's favourite composer, **Chopin**. She said that even when she used to play it on the piano it was difficult, but she made no compromise with the tempo and gave a scintillating performance. Needless to say, these were two more of her own transcriptions. She pointed out that Chopin, despite never writing for the guitar, loved the instrument, so she hoped he would like her guitar version in heaven - well, certainly guitar heaven had visited us in Bournemouth for the night!



Julian.

Xuefei Yang Masterclass Sunday 6th Feb.

I was listening to Radio 4's book of the week - **Battle Hymn of a Tiger Mother** - the day after the master class, about a Chinese mother in the US struggling with her two talented daughters who are learning piano and violin. Apparently an American parent will reward their child for managing thirty minutes practice, whereas a Chinese mother knows that the second and third hours are the most difficult!!

Clearly many thousands of hours are required to become proficient on any instrument, but in her masterclass on Sunday morning, Ms Yang needed only half an hour with each student to give much valuable advice and inspiration, and also the chance to observe a wonderful technique at very close quarters—definitely an opportunity not to be missed. 6 students played, and in order were, **Heather** - Sor - Study op6 no11, **Stuart** - Bach - Allemande 1st Lute Suite, **Julian** - Own Composition, **Maurice** - Albeniz - Asturias, **Andrew** - Malats - Serenata Espanola, and **Michael** - own transcription of Cordoba- Albeniz.

Ms Yang showed that as well as being a supreme exponent of our instrument, she is also an excellent teacher, managing each half hour with great efficiency, and allowing time, not only for the student to play right through each piece—and some were quite lengthy—but also to extract the musical essentials, and show how it is possible to express them on the guitar. She also managed to complete work on each piece with many demonstrations and allowed time at the end for summing up the various points that had arisen. As all teachers know, time - management is a bit of an art in itself.

A small audience listened intently throughout and it was surprising how quickly the morning flew by. Many valuable technical and musical issues were brought to the fore, and I was a little surprised at her very traditional

approach to technique. In this day and age when most teachers seem to emphasise free-stroke development, several times during the course of the morning, the use of the rest stroke in both treble and bass was recommended for tone and clarity of melodic lines. Not easy to do if one has well developed habits that do not easily allow for this.

Ms Yang demonstrated all these points with the greatest amount of freedom and fluency. Clearly, this is one of the ways of bringing out the different layers, evident in many pieces, in fact, “layers” was a word that cropped up several times during the morning, as did the idea of musical conception and the need to develop a technique sufficient to fulfil this. As was shown, a ‘bouncing’ right hand will not serve to connect the notes within a phrase, any more than left hand fingering that allows an awkward jump of the first finger to a barre, will help to give a smooth, singing melodic line!. Which I think is one of the reasons given for the need for a clear conception of what one is trying to do. This was such valuable advice.

As a bonus to a superb morning, Xuefei Yang gave us another demonstration of her remarkable abilities as she put Chris' latest guitar through its paces. We heard the last movement of the Aranjuez, some extracts from the Adagio, and also Sainz de La Maza's Petenera. Despite being unpolished as yet, and only strung for the first time a few days before, the instrument already sounds very promising..

John.



January Meeting



It was super so see (nearly!) **Everybody** there today, and well done to all to focus so well on Julian's piece. You all work very well as a team - which is what its all about! - and as ever the more are there the better it all is.

And please everybody again join me in thanking **Julian** (above) for the work and inspiration he put into his piece for us, which was played through today for the first time. Which means, of course, please keep up what you managed to get together today, because we will have one more new piece to do for the concert in May, and hopefully the Bach.

Concert at last meeting

Andrew started with a short Ponce prelude (blink and you'll miss it, he said) and then his own transcription of Dowland's "Lady Hunsdon's Puffe".

Chris and **John** followed with John's transcription of three keyboard pieces written by JS Bach for his son Wilhelm Friedemann.

Stephen's little history lecture on the background to Ernest Shand and his work ended with a performance of "Sorrow and Song" and "The Gnomes". A copy of Shand's guitar method, published in Bournemouth in 1896 was shown.

Maurice ended proceedings with Koshkin's dark and imposing "Usher's Waltz".

Stephen.

We meet at: **Kinson Community Centre, Pelhams Park, Millhams Road, Kinson, BH10 7LH**
Registered Charity No. 1101122

Committee Members

Terry Robinson - Chairman	01305 834 774	chair@dorsetguitarsociety.org.uk
Stephen Kenyon - Musical Director	01305 257 099	sbk@jacaranda-music.com
James Martin - Secretary	07767 494576	
Bill Eggleston - Treasurer	01425 650076	

Member of **The Federation of Guitar Societies** (www.federationofguitarsocieties.org.uk)
& CADArts (www.cadarts.com)

Future Meetings and Diary Dates

20 February	2.00 pm - 5.30 pm	19 June	5.30 pm - 9.30 pm
20 March	5.30 pm - 9.30 pm	17 July	5.30 pm - 9.30 pm
17 April	5.30 pm - 9.30 pm	21 August	5.30 pm - 9.30 pm
15 May	5.30 pm - 9.30 pm	18 September	5.30 pm - 9.30 pm

Third Thursday of the month - 'North Dorset Guitar Forum'

Regular playing opportunity organised by Julian Garner Woodhouse Gardens Pavilion, Blandford Forum 7.20pm. email: julian@renrag.co.uk or tel: **01258 830334** for more details

Friday March 4th Eleftheria Kotzia will give a recital at **Campion Hall, St Mary's School, Shaftesbury.**

Tickets are £10 (£7) and it starts at 7.30. Details from **01963 251620** or **01963 33614**.



"a robust character mixed with quiet sensitivity...the voraciousness of Julian Bream combined with a feminine delicacy of control - all infused with the pizzazz of Greek spirit" (Classical Guitar magazine)

August 13 - 20 2nd Exeter Guitar Festival The new web site with application forms etc. will be up and running soon. Course tutors/visiting artists - Stephen Gordon, Gerald Garcia, John Mills (tbc), Alison Smith, Vida Guitar Quartet (Mark Ashford, Mark Eden, Helen Sanderson, Chris Stell).

This is an intensive course, for a maximum of 16 guitarists of at least grade 6 standard with good reading ability and will comprise of guitar ensemble, classes, workshops, tuition and concerts. The concert series will be in the nearby Phoenix Arts Centre.

See www.esgmusic.com for further details

Diary entry - dates to follow ...

Coda Music Centre

Celtic Music workshop with Stephen Kenyon.

- i. Guitar to accompany Irish tunes,
 - ii Bodhran for Absolute Beginners.
- Times etc later. See Stephen for further details

Sunday May 22. 3.00pm. Dorset Guitar Society Summer Concert. DGS Guitar Orchestra and featured soloists. Kinson Community Centre, Pelhams Park, Millhams Road, Kinson, Bournemouth BH10 7LH. Further details in the New Year.

Sunday July 3. 3.00pm Stephen kenyon, Guitar.

RNLI benefit Concert: Dowland, Scarlatti, Sor, Ernest Shand, Tarrega, Peter Hope. Kinson Community Centre, Pelhams Park, Millhams Road, Kinson, Bournemouth BH10 7LH. Further details from Stephen ...



Editors bit

Thanks to John, Julian and Stephen for sending in material for the Feb. newsletter - I appreciate it. So, a plea to one and all - **PLEASE** send me items (concert dates, recommendations, reviews, etc) for the March newsletter as soon as possible after the next meeting - Ideally by e-mail to:

Stuart@nundy.fsworld.co.uk

Many thanks, **Stuart**