Fall Concerts at Sundin Music Hall

Saturday, Sept. 15th
Mak Grgić

We're glad to introduce to Minnesota an exciting new voice on classical guitar, Mak Grgić of Slovenia, for his first performances here. On Friday, September 14th he'll be in Morris for a concert at the U of Minnesota campus there (arranged by MGS board member Jim Flegel). The next night, Saturday the 15th, Grgić will present the first concert of our 2012–13 season at Sundin Music Hall. The program features a splendid mix of favorites from the standard repertoire and new or rarely heard works. Don't miss this chance to hear a brilliant young artist at the start of what is sure to become a stellar career!

Bio

At the age of 24, Mak Grgić has already been invited to a multitude of music venues worldwide. These include The Allegro Guitar Series in Dallas-Forth Worth, the Portland (Oregon) Classical Guitar Society, Guitar Festival Mikulov, Piran Music Nights, The Sounds of Six Strings, Cankarjev Dom, The Dallas Opera with Chamber Orchestra in performances of Peter Maxwell Davies's The Lighthouse, and the Lancaster Festival in Lancaster, Ohio, for a performance of Rodrigo's Fantasia para un Gentilhombre, conducted by Gary Sheldon, newly appointed conductor of the Miami City Ballet. Recently, Grgić has performed with the Spokane Symphony at the Festival at Sandpoint, Idaho, at the “Musica a 4 Stelle” summer festival in Grado, Italy, at St. Donat's Church in Zadar, Croatia, at the Atrium of the City Museum of Ljubljana, Slovenia, and at the Guitar Festival at William Paterson University in Wayne, New Jersey. Grgić made his orchestral debut with the St. Petersburg Symphony in St. Petersburg, Russia, playing Rodrigo's Concierto de Aranjuez. For four years he was a member of the Zagreb Guitar Quartet, which toured throughout Croatia as well as from Dubai to Montreal to Mobile, Alabama, to Paris.

Grgić took first prize at the Pacific Guitar Festival and Competition 2011, and has been honored with highest prizes at: the First Andres Segovia International Competition for young guitarists in Velbert, Germany, the Forum Gitarre Wien International Competition,

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Saturday, Oct. 20th
Duo Sudamericano

We think every guitarist would agree that few sounds are more musically satisfying than a finely played solo classical guitar—except perhaps for two such guitars, played together! We are very fortunate to have two outstanding, and very different, guitar duos on our program this season. Our visiting artists in October, each a stellar performer as a soloist, have created something very special in the past decade with Duo Sudamericano. Their performances and recordings feature an amazing combination of familiar works and sounds (such as Gismonti and Piazzolla) with original compositions and arrangements, and other new work. No place in North America would be a better venue for this duo than Sundin Music Hall, and there is no better time to be there than Saturday, October 20th. Duo Sudamericano will also conduct a masterclass on Sunday, October 21st in our area. Details on that were pending as we went to press. Check our website (<www.mnguitar.org>) for details in advance of the weekend, find us on Facebook, and call our information line (612-677-1151) to reserve your concert tickets!

Bio

Since they met in 2003, renowned Chilean guitarists José Antonio Escobar and Javier Contreras have collaborated on each other's solo concerts at festivals and concert series in Chile and abroad. From the start, they have shown a virtuosity and musicality that have entranced the general public and the critics. For this reason, they decided to focus on developing a duo identity, becoming one of the most outstanding new instrumental ensembles. Duo Sudamericano has consolidated an attractive repertoire essentially created from and inspired by South America, where the most varied expressions of the classic-contemporary style are fused with folk, jazz, and popular music with Latin American roots. In 2009, their first recording, Truco, was released with works mainly composed by Javier Contreras himself along with other South American composers such as Astor Piazzolla, Egberto Gismonti, and Alberto Ginastera. In 2010, Duo Sudamericano premiered the first concerto for two guitars and string orchestra by Javier Contreras.

José Antonio Escobar (b. 1973) is one of the most distinguished and versatile classical guitar soloists of his generation, drawing

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Also in this issue: News and Notes Galore!; Ben Woolman considers going Back to Basics; A Party Invitation from the MGS Board.

Minnesota Guitar Society—Find us and like us on Facebook!
Adieu Summer Concert 2012

MGS member Pavel Jany announces this year’s edition of a great annual event, the “Adieu Summer Concert,” on Sunday September 9th from 4 to 6:30 pm in the Como Lakeside Pavilion, at 1360 N. Lexington Pkwy, St. Paul. Tickets are $10, admission for children under 12 is free. For online tickets and for more info visit <www.tickettobrasil.com> or call 651-308-7246. The “Adieu Summer Concert” is an annual multicultural family event celebrating and embracing diversity through international music and dance. This year the lineup will include the instrumental group The Talking Strings featuring violinist Gary Shulte, jazz vocalist Lee Engele, Trio Bossa Nova featuring vocalist/percussionist Lidia Berman, and Ticket to Brasil performing as a 10-piece ensemble featuring guitarist Pavel Jany, saxophonist Doug Little, Brazilian vocalist Joyce Perez, and keyboardist Dan Musselman, among others.

First-Ever MGS Garage Sale!

Regular Sundin concert attendees have seen our info table. You may have checked out the display of donated sheet music—our small fun- and fund-raising enterprise. Well, we’re making a good thing better. All this season, we will collect guitar-related items—books, sheet music, and CDs. Bring your contribution to any Sundin concert, and leave it with the MGS board member(s) at the info table. All items must be in good or better condition. All will be displayed and for sale at (only) the last two concerts of our season—Xuefei Yang in April and the May guitarathon. Proceeds will benefit the Youth Guitarathon project. Help us raise funds and have some fun!

Matching Gift Campaign a Success!

We’ll have the final numbers in the next issue of our newsletter but we can tell you now that, thanks to the extra generosity of many members, the Board’s matching gift pledge has been met and so has our critical need for added support this season. Our thanks to all of you! Our friends and members make the music happen.

Twin Cities Classical Guitar Meetup

The Twin Cities Classical Guitar Meetup is an informal group of players interested in getting together to perform pieces, attend concerts, or simply enjoy sharing ideas about classical guitar. Whether you are a rank beginner or a seasoned pro, you are welcome here. Through our

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the International Guitar Competition in Arrenzano, Italy, the Fifth Anna Amalia Competition for young guitarists in Weimar, Germany, and the International GuitarArt Festival and Competition in Belgrade, Serbia, As the youngest participant, he was awarded the third place in the category with no age limit at the Concorso Europeo di Chitarra Classica, Citta di Gorizia, in Italy in 2005.

Born in 1987 in Ljubljana, Slovenia, Mak Grgić follows in a distinguished line of some of today’s finest young guitarists emerging from the Croatian school of guitar. In Zagreb, he studied with Ante Cagalj at the Elly Basic Conservatory of Music and obtained his bachelor’s degree after studying with Alvaro Pierri at the Universitaet fur Musik und darstellende Kunst in Vienna, Austria. Currently, he is pursuing a master’s degree at the USC Thornton School of Music as a student of William Kanengiser of the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet.

A new work has been composed for Grgić, scored for solo guitar and electronics, by composer Payton MacDonald, a founding member of the acclaimed ensemble Alarm Will Sound. Grgić distinguishes himself as a versatile guitarist, playing classical and improvised guitar music, and offers repertoire ranging from baroque to Spanish to modern music of his homeland. He also plays the music of popular jazz artists such as Pat Metheny. A new CD, *String Modulations*, consisting of the music of Slovenian composer and guitarist Nejc Kuhar, features Grgić and has been released by the Slovenian Ministry of Culture and Radio Slovenia.
attention through a perfect balance between his intense musical expression and his vast knowledge of various musical styles and periods. Born in Santiago, Chile, he studied at the Conservatory of Music University of Chile under Ernesto Quezada, graduating with Top Honors (summa cum laude). He received his graduate degree (Meisterklassendiplom), after obtaining a scholarship from the Foreign Affairs Ministry in Chile to study under Franz Halasz at the Hochschule für Musik in Augsburg, Germany, where he also worked as an assistant professor. In addition, he took courses and masterclasses in Early Music with Hopkinson Smith, Eduardo Egüez, and Juan Carlos Rivera. He has performed in more than 30 countries throughout Europe, the Americas, the Middle East, and Asia. He has performed as a soloist with orchestras in Europe and South America, at major concert venues. He has recorded for the Naxos label and RTVE (Spanish Radio and Television), and produced several independent recordings as well. Currently, he frequently performs and gives masterclasses at major festivals, music seminars, and universities worldwide. His many awards include First Place prizes at the Heitor Villa-Lobos International Competition (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1997); the Alirio Diaz International Guitar Competition (Caracas, Venezuela, 1998); the Francisco Tárrega International Guitar Competition (Benicassim, Spain, 2000); the Stotsenberg International Guitar Competition (currently Parkening International Guitar Competition; California, 2001); the Julian Arcas International Guitar Competition (Almería, Spain, 2003); and the Norba Caesarina International Guitar Competition (Cáceres, Spain, 2005).

Javier Contreras (born in Punta Arenas, 1983) is a young Chilean composer who has absorbed harmonic and formal methods from the classical tradition of the guitar while combining them with the rhythmic impulse of popular Chilean guitar. For example, he achieves this fusion of elements by writing his ‘tonada’ “Euclidica” in the style of the cueca (the national dance of Chile) with a continually evolving melody progressing in thematic surges and returning time after time without pause or interruption. In “Tonada del Retorno” (Tonada of Return), Contreras exploits the instrument’s percussive possibilities, moving from traditional language to a more abstract, virtuosic style. In contrast, in “Tonada a mi madre” (Tonada for My Mother), the composer returns to the more direct language of “Euclidica.” Finally, in his homage to Victor Jara, “Sentido y razón” (Feeling and Reason), the composer includes fragments of the popular trova, presented with great sensitivity and in accordance with the style in which Jara himself played the guitar.

Duo Sudamericano Program

Javier Contreras (Chile, 1983)
- Punta Arenas (Tonada)
- Pampera (aire de Vidala)
- La Última Plaza (chacarera)
- Manantiales
- Karina Contreras (Chile, 1988)
- El Palacio de las Azucenas
- Al Sur de la Primavera
- Javier Contreras
- Tres Puentes
- Truco (Homenaje a Hermeto Pascoal)

Intermission

Javier Contreras
- Costanera Del Estrecho
- Kajef
- Egberto Gismonti (Brasil, 1947)
- Maracatu (arr. Duo Sudamericano)
- Astor Piazzolla (Argentina, 1921–92)
- Tango Suite (Allegro, Andante, Allegro)

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2012-13 OpenStage Season Begins Sept. 9 — by Mark Bussey

OpenStage is a major highlight for me each month. I’ve been running OpenStage for a few years now, and I have to admit there are times when I imagine how nice it would be to spend a quiet Sunday in my garden instead of gathering up newsletters, printing sign-up sheets, grabbing the spare music stand and footrest, and trying to get out of the house early enough to get to the Coffee Grounds and get the stage set up and the PA system running by 2 pm. But thoughts like that dissolve the minute the first person gets on stage to play.

Unfailingly, I leave OpenStage energized and amazed by all the wonderful musicians who get up on stage to share their love of music and the guitar. There’s never a Sunday that goes by that I haven’t heard someone play something that I end up really wanting to learn myself. Most months we have new folks join us who might be trying out their first time on stage. And there’s a host of ‘regulars’ who, like any good friends, I start to worry about if I don’t see for a few months.

For me, that’s what makes OpenStage so great. It’s a welcoming, encouraging place to come try out new pieces, hone performance skills, and connect with other guitarists. OpenStage began when Dennis Burns and a few other MGS members were looking for a way to become more comfortable sharing their music—to work on stage jitters, to become more at ease playing for friends, to gain experience performing instead of just practicing in isolation. It’s still that today—a friendly and supportive place to share music and experience the joy of playing for others. Whether you’re a performer, or a listener, I hope you will join us this season!

Sign Up!

If you’d like monthly e-mail reminders and notices of special OpenStage events, please send an email to <editor@mnguitar.org> requesting to be put on the OpenStage mailing list. We also post our schedule on the MGS website, <www.mnguitar.org/calendar>.

SCHEDULE for 2012–13:

OpenStage once a month, on (usually the first and sometimes the second) Sunday, from 2 till 4 pm:
*Sept. 9th / *Oct 14th / Nov. 4th / Dec. 2nd / Jan. 6th / Feb. 3rd / Mar. 3rd / April 7th / May 5th

LOCATION: OpenStage is hosted at The Coffee Grounds in Falcon Heights, about 10 minutes from either Minneapolis or St. Paul downtown. Their address is: The Coffee Grounds, 1579 Hamline Ave. N., St. Paul (651) 644-9959 / <www.thecoffeegrounds.net>.

Easy to get to from Hwys 35E/W, 94, or 36 (but check the MnDOT website for construction updates)!

New Community Concerts Series — by Paul Hintz

On Sunday, September 23rd, at 2 pm, six fine steel-string guitarists will be in concert at the beautiful amphitheater in Woodbury’s indoor Central Park, a reprise of last season’s Acoustic Guitarathon made possible by a Metropolitan Regional Arts Council Arts Activities Support grant. The concert marks a new phase in our local programming. The Local Artists series has for many years showcased emerging and established performers. As we increasingly emphasize partnering with other organizations and venues in the greater metro area, it’s time to rename these concerts as the Community Concerts series. The September 23rd event marks the official start of this new initiative, and includes these artists:

Mike Cramer, originally from the Quad-Cities area between Iowa and Illinois, moved to the Twin Cities in 2003, finding his way into our jazz and acoustic music scenes. He performs on guitar and mandolin, and has competed in the National Flatpicking Contest in Winfield, Kansas, and the Minnesota State Fair Flatpicking Contest, where he placed third. He presents workshops across the country and is on the Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Arts faculty.

Composer-guitarist Jon Finley, a 3rd place winner in the Canadian Fingerstyle Guitar Competition, began playing guitar at age 16 after studying piano and violin. He plays progressive fingerstyle, like modern player-composers such as Michael Hedges, and uses harmonics, tapping, and percussion to enhance his songs’ independent melody and bass lines. He studied music at DePaul Conservatory and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Steve Kaul infuses his country blues-based songwriting and playing with Indian, Hawaiian, Celtic, and Middle Eastern flavors. He teaches fingerstyle techniques and open tuning tips in workshops and continues to collaborate both onstage and in the studio with musicians from diverse backgrounds. He has released six CDs of original music including two solo CDs, opened for national artists, and performed at festivals across the US and in the Czech Republic.

Mark Keating began on piano at age 5, guitar at 9, drums at 11, and bass at 15. His father said, “To make it as a musician, learn all styles of music and play them fluently.” That became Mark’s objective. He started playing drums professionally at age 12 with his parents’ band. He sang in choir, and played with the big band in high school, while working weekends around Minnesota in bands playing any and all styles. After high school he played shows at a local amusement park, moved to Colorado to play in a hula band, returned to the Midwest and joined a full-time traveling show band. Then he took a detour into dog training. Ten years later, it was time to explore the acoustic guitar. He immersed himself in Hedges, Kottke, Bensusan, and various world and Celtic artists. He draws on all of this in his original compositions. He performs

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It was the great Benjamin Verdery who said, “Never ever be afraid to go back to the basics of playing the guitar.” I have been ruminating over this comment ever since I heard it during a masterclass by Verdery at the University of St. Thomas. Recently, it has been sounding a particularly resonant chord within. Of course, at the time, Ben was referring to technical aspects of playing the guitar, i.e., slurs, scales, arpeggios exercises—you know, the basic technical work that we all go through to become proficient players. Even when you think you have things under control, mastered maybe, there is always something to be learned and refined by revisiting the fundamentals. This is applicable to technical as well as metaphysical aspects of the playing the guitar. For this article, I am focusing on the metaphysical. Technique will be addressed another time.

These past couple of weeks I have been going back to the basics of my playing by burying myself deeply into some of the roots music that forms the relatively short, yet rich, history of American finger-style guitar. I think it is important to do this, to become aware of the history of what you do, to further deepen your relationship with the music you play and ultimately produce. I guess it is, essentially, looking back to move forward.

Blind Blake, Blind Boy Fuller, and Joseph Spence, are the artists that have been speaking to me as of late. Blake’s (ragtime) heyday was in the late 1920s to early 1930s. Fuller (blues/ragtime) was active in the late 1920s to the 1940s. And Spence (gospel/Bahamian songs) was “discovered” in the late 1950s and remained an active player until he died in 1984. I always find myself circling back to these players when I need to ground myself musically, when I feel things are spinning way out beyond the stratosphere and everything sounds like trash. It happens. These dudes are another form of gravity.

Blake, Fuller, and Spence exhibit three common qualities that all players should hear, listen to, and absorb (of course there are more but these are the ones that are most striking at the moment). You don’t need to play their pieces, or explore their respective genres of music, or even like them for that matter, but their work demonstrate some true, bedrock, foundational principles that endure and will help anyone further their abilities. All three are open to interpretation in the strict sense, but when you listen, you’ll know what I mean: (1) a profound sense of rhythm (groove); (2) a profound sense of emotional expressiveness (soul); (3) a profound sense of freedom (sense of humor and spontaneity).

All of these qualities are adaptable to any kind of music that you play. It is so easy to get bogged down by the “what” and the “how” and forget the “why.” These three giants (and many others of their time and beyond) were connected in such a “way” that is infectious. People smiled when they heard them—heck, people danced! Never ever be afraid to go back to the basics.
Question: Where can you find one of the highest concentrations of guitar talent and passion in Minnesota?

Answer: At any and every meeting of the MGS Board of Directors.

Our Society’s board contains an amazing and diverse array of guitar professionals, amateurs, and aficionados. While we work to bring nationally and internationally known artists to the Sundin Music Hall stage, and to feature a broad and varied array of Minnesota guitar talent in our Community Concerts around the metro area, we don’t always feature the talents of our own board members.

We plan to change all that on October 7th, when we hold our first-ever MGS Board Play-athon at the MacPhail Center for Music. The theme of the event is a celebration of, and sincere thank you to, the many members of the Society who have supported the organization this past year, especially those who contributed to our very successful matching-gift drive this summer. (More about that in our next newsletter!)

While fund-raising will be mentioned that day (it is a telethon type event, after all), please don’t be alarmed—we’re not going to ask anyone to pledge a dollar for every minute that a board member plays, or 10 cents for every note plucked. Of course, if some folks feel inclined to increase their MGS support that day, or during the coming season, we won’t be disappointed!

Our primary goal for this event is to provide an opportunity to share some music, socialize in an informal and comfortable atmosphere, and check-in on how we’re doing. Antonello Hall at MacPhail is a beautiful venue in which to see and hear guitar played. The adjoining lobby provides a comfortable place to meet and mingle.

The event runs from 1 to 5 pm. There will be plenty of music, but also plenty of time to socialize and chat with board members. We’ll have multiple performances throughout the afternoon, so feel free to drop by for all or part of the event—think of it as a guitar open-house! Like any open house, we’re planning on some great company, fantastic music, and, of course, some refreshments. We intend to have so much fun that everyone will demand a yearly encore, and we sure hope we’ll see you!

What: Minnesota Guitar Society Board Play-athon
When: Sunday, October 7th from 1 to 5 pm
Where: MacPhail Center for Music, Antonello Hall
501 S. 2nd St., Minneapolis (near the Mill City Museum and the Guthrie Theater)

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