



String tie: Celebrating the guitar

By Karen Mamone
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When Thomas Koch was 11 years old, his parents took him to a concert in his native Cologne. It was Andres Segovia, the legendary Spanish classical guitarist.

More than 2,000 people packed the concert hall, he recalled, and there, walking onto the stage was one man holding one unamplified musical instrument. With that instrument, he electrified the entire audience into silence.

That's all it took.

Some 30 years later, Koch is a teacher and a performer of classical guitar whose love for the instrument encouraged him to found GuitarSarasota, a nonprofit organization to promote the education, appreciation and cultural significance of the instrument.

Why guitar? Why not piano or oboe or glockenspiel? Koch shrugs.

"Why do we fall in love? Why do we marry this one, and not another one? It's destiny."

With this last sentence, Koch nods toward the next room, where his wife Jennifer, a graphic designer with the Asolo, is working.

"The guitar," he says, searching for the right word. "The guitar speaks to me."

And now he is at the forefront of helping that voice speak to others. Founded last year, GuitarSarasota has a threefold mission: educating, celebrating and performing.

New members, he said, are welcome, and they received reduced prices on tickets.

Here is the season schedule:

GuitarSarasota sets 2006-07 Season

GuitarSarasota's upcoming 2006-07 season will present an international selection of world-class classical guitar performers beginning in October.

Tickets are \$15 for non-members, and \$12 for members. Master class presentations are planned throughout the year and information will be available by calling 362-2991.

Local sponsors this year include: Lester King Fire and Safety Inc., IMS Claim Services Inc., Mattison's Catering Company and Elysian Fields.

All concerts will be held in Fellowship Hall at St. Paul Lutheran Church, 2256 Bahia Vista St., beginning at 7:30 p.m. A short reception will follow each concert to honor the performing artists with hors d'oeuvres and refreshments.

In the coming season, GuitarSarasota is lucky to have engaged some of the best and

most respected classical guitarists working today.

The upcoming season features:

Oct. 7 - Stephen Robinson

Stephen Robinson was heralded by The New York Times for his "effortless virtuosity with intelligence and good taste," and by Fanfare Magazine as "a guitarist of the first order." Maestro Andres Segovia called him "a magnificent guitarist, one of the most brilliant guitarists of our times."

This upcoming season, Robinson will perform throughout Florida as part of the state's premier Arts on Tour Program. His performances and compact discs are heard throughout the world. With a strong commitment to the performance of new music, Robinson has commissioned and premiered many solo and chamber works. His second solo CD, "An American Record," features the debut recording of works by Samuel Adler, Harold Blanchard and Harold Schiffman, which Soundboard calls "masterful and poetic." Professor Robinson is the founding director of both the Guitar Program and the Stetson International Guitar Program at Stetson University.

Nov. 18 - Members & Friends Concert

This concert will feature a mix of classical, flamenco and jazz music performed by friends and members of GuitarSarasota. This is a fund-raising event, and the whole family is welcome.

Jan. 20 - Jason Vieaux

Jason Vieaux is one of the most highly acclaimed and sought-after guitarists of his generation. His virtuosity, expressive music-making and exciting concert programs continue to earn him an active schedule of solo, chamber and concerto appearances around the U.S. and abroad. Recent highlights include a tour of Taiwan and Japan, a return engagement with the Auckland Philharmonia, and performances at the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia, Spivey Hall in Atlanta and New York's Merkin Hall.

Vieaux recorded his first CD when he was just 19; two years later this was followed by the "Laureate Series Guitar Recital on Naxos," which went on to sell over 30,000 copies internationally. Vieaux's recordings and live performances are broadcast nationally on the radio and worldwide via the Internet. Since NPR's "Performance Today" program selected him as a 2002 Young Artist-in-Residence, Vieaux has regularly aired on the top-rated show.

In 1992, Vieaux became the youngest first-prize winner in the history of the prestigious Guitar Foundation of America International Competition. In 1995, Vieaux was honored as an Artistic Ambassador of the United States to Southeast Asia, performing in Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar (Burma). He has also toured Spain, France, Mexico, Canada and New Zealand. Vieaux is a regularly featured guest artist with orchestras across the United States. He has performed concertos with the Cleveland Orchestra, Cleveland Pops, the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, the Auckland Philharmonia, the Ars Nova Chamber Orchestra and Orchestra 2001.

Aside from his duties as a performer, Vieaux is highly dedicated to the art of

teaching. He currently resides in Cleveland, Ohio, where he is head of the Cleveland Institute of Music Guitar Department, making him the youngest department head to serve at the prestigious conservatory.

March 3 - Jérôme DuCharme

Canadian guitarist Jérôme Ducharme is the first-prize winner of the 2005 Guitar Foundation of America International Competition. As part of winning the competition, Ducharme is currently touring over 50 cities in the United States, Canada and Mexico. A graduate of the Conservatory of Montreal, DuCharme has emerged to become one of the leading guitarists of our time.

GuitarSarasota is a proud sponsor of the yearly Guitar Foundation of America tour and will continue to present the first-prize winner to the Sarasota audience and members. He has been a multiple prize winner in various other competitions including the 2004 GFA competition, the Guitare-Antony competition in France, the 2003 Guitarre-Lachine competition in Montreal, as well as the 2000 Festival de Lanaudiere competition. Recent performances have included an appearance in 2005 with the Montréal Symphonic Orchestra for Donizetti's opera "Don Pasquale." A featured performer on the Montreal Guitar Society's inaugural season, Ducharme's playing has also been broadcast on SRC-CBC radio in Canada.

GuitarSarasota membership is open to all who are interested in the guitar. Contact Thomas Koch, president, at 362-2991 or [email: thomaskoch.artofguitar@verizon.net](mailto:thomaskoch.artofguitar@verizon.net).