

GUITAR NEWS

THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE CLASSIC GUITAR ASSOCIATION
(INTERNATIONAL)

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FEBRUARY—MARCH, 1953

THE CHILD AND THE GUITAR

There is much to be said for the choice of the classic guitar for a child. The guitar is such a friendly, personal instrument. Both hands are in direct contact with the strings—one to control the pitch of the sounds, the other to produce them. The child who owns a guitar has great pride in it and treats it with care and respect. The guitar demands skill but not undue physical strength and its portability is a great advantage. Another advantage, not so much for the child as for others in the same house, is that the guitar in the practising stage is much less disturbing than other instruments.

Although the essential function of the frets is to enable the strings to vibrate clearly, the frets help the student not only in finding the notes but in developing a sense of true pitch and the recognition of musical intervals. Children who learn to play the guitar learn much more—elements of harmony, theory of music and something of the great composers whose music they play on the instrument. They learn to appreciate the exquisite and subtle beauties of sound produced by such a master-musician as Segovia.

Such a child will have a life-long interest, a hobby, which will be a source of happiness and re-creation. He or she will find other interests, of course, but no doubt will say with Paganini: "I love the guitar for its harmony. It is my constant companion in all my travels."

There is one great essential in allowing a child to study the guitar. **There must be a reliable and suitable teacher.**

JOHN CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS—Child Prodigy

By Wilfrid M. Appleby

A GUITARIST friend in Australia first told me of a 'very promising' boy guitarist in Melbourne who was being taught the classic guitar according to modern (Tarrega) technique by his English-born father, Len Williams. In the early months of 1952 Mr. Williams, with his Australian-born wife and son, returned to London and founded the Spanish Guitar Centre where, one afternoon in September, my wife and I were introduced to John Christopher, a lively boy of eleven years. Mr. Williams had just shown us his fine Esteso guitar. 'Could John play on it?' we asked. John took the guitar and in a moment his agile little fingers were bringing forth music by Rameau, Tarrega and Sor with a facility and natural sureness which was most astonishing in one so young. I suggested that a passage in the Sor-Mozart *Thème Varié* could be played 'top-stroke' — without hesitation he played it thus, although he had not previously practised it in that way. Realising that here was a young guitarist with phenomenal talent we urged his father to arrange for him to meet Segovia, for no one in the world would be better able to help in the development of such a rare genius.

In November Segovia and also Olga Coelho arrived in London for recitals. John played before them at Segovia's hotel and after hearing him Segovia said

"He must go to the Summer School at Siena (Italy). I shall recommend him." To be able to take part in the Segovia Course at the Chigiana Academy, Siena, it is usually necessary to pass a very stiff test. Moreover, no student of such a tender age has ever before been accepted. Segovia's recommendation must therefore be regarded as indicating the exceptional.

With characteristic kindness Segovia gave him advice and instruction, writing out for him his own special fingering of all major and minor scales and setting him to work on the 20 Sor studies which he (Segovia) has fingered and arranged (published by Magnet Music Inc. New York).

From John's father I learned how it all commenced. At the age of five John first became interested in the guitar and was taught to pick out little tunes by ear. At six he insisted on a proper guitar and Mr. Williams taught him from the first *by music*. It was definitely John's own idea to learn to play the guitar. Actually his father had the piano in mind for him later on, but John had his own way. When the boy showed such natural aptitude he, of course, received every help and encouragement from both parents. Mrs. Williams, who herself plays the guitar a little, has taken a tremendous part in John's development. She has always shared his interest, giving encouragement and even strong criticism when it was necessary.

John was extremely fortunate in having been taught orthodox modern Spanish technique from the start. His development was not hampered by the faulty instruction and consequent bad habits that many of us have had to spend so much time and effort trying to overcome. Segovia remarked on the fundamental correctness of his technique in both hands. He uses shortish nails in the Segovia manner, letting the flesh-tip of the finger first come into contact with the string.

At six years of age he started with a full scale Panormo guitar, but at ten he changed to concert scale (a little over 25½ inches). He is now eleven; his fingers show extraordinary development, the first and fourth of the left hand can stretch out almost horizontally in line. His practice routine is one and a half hours solid practice before bed each evening and five or six hours over the week-end—all his own idea.

But it must not be thought that John Christopher has no other interest in life—far from it! He likes his English school even better than the Australian school! He plays quite a good game of chess, but his real hobby is *Max*, his Alsatian dog. Home from school he takes the dog out for a run and training before any thought of tea or guitar practice. His declared ambition is to run an Alsatian dog kennels—and play the guitar as a sideline! He takes *Max* to a training school for dogs—and he realises that to become a successful concert guitarist thorough training is essential; so is sound health. In a way *Max* is quite a good teacher! *Max* can take a lot of petting without losing his head.

This may have something to do with the natural, unconceited manner of John Christopher. He first broadcast at the age of seven in Melbourne—a Carcassi study. He has given short recitals in London, and been kissed, hugged and showered with compliments by all manner of people; but he simply looks a little embarrassed—no sign of 'swelled head.'

Among his treasures he now has two photographs—one of Segovia signed: "To my dear John—Segovia" and the other of Olga Coelho inscribed: "To John, whom I expect to be applauding at the Festival Hall one day—Olga Coelho."



JOHN CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS

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FRANCISCO TARREGA CENTENARY

Homage in Spain

(Compiled from programmes, articles in the Spanish Press and a report from Señor F. Fernandez Lavie. Señor Lavie was ill so Señor Felix Bueno, Vice-President of Peña Guitarrística Tarrega, of Barcelona, deputised for him at Villareal and Castellon).

THE celebrations commenced with a unique concert in the Salon Tarrega at Villareal de los Infantes, Tarrega's birthplace, a few miles from Castellon, on November 20th. There, before a distinguished audience of about 3,000 people, four famous guitarists, each a disciple of Tarrega, played solos by the Gran Maestro—Pepita Roca, Josefina Robledo, Daniel Fortea and Emilio Pujol. In addition, Daniel Fortea played his own 'Elegie a la Memoria de Tarrega' and Emilio Pujol played his new composition 'Homenaje a Tarrega' (which is described as 'wonderful, marvellous!'). The soloists were applauded to the echo and showered with bouquets. Then came eloquent speeches by the Lord Mayor of Villareal and the Provincial Governor, the Alcalde of Valencia, Sr. D. Baltasar Rull who spoke on behalf of the Head of the Government and the Ministry of Education. Messages and greetings, which included letters from C.G.A. (International) and "Les Amis de la Guitare" (France), were read by Señor Felix Bueno. Special guests of honour included the son and daughter of Tarrega—Don Francisco and Dona Maria.

On the morning of Friday the 21st, a Solemn Requiem Service took place in the church of Santa Maria, Castellon, where Tarrega is buried. The church was crowded and afterwards at the tomb of the Gran Maestro speeches were made by the Governor and the Lord Mayor, poets declaimed, flowers were laid and women wept. The Orchestra of Castellon played Capricho Arabe and Danza Mora very sympathetically.

In the afternoon at Villareal a monument to Tarrega's memory was unveiled with the highest honours, flowers, speeches and music. A special concert of homage was given at the Villareal Cinema Theatre during the evening by the Municipal Orchestra of Valencia.

On the Saturday morning there was another concert at Castellon by the Orchestra of Castellon with items by Tarrega and in homage to him. The same evening in Villareal a second great concert took place. It consisted chiefly of a recital by Rafael Balaguer, Professor of the guitar at the Conservatoire of Valencia, who played solos by Tarrega and works by Galindo, Fortea and Turina, written in Tarrega's honour. It was a great success and the guitarist was obliged to play several encores.

This ended a great manifestation which will live in the memories of those who took part in it. Guitar enthusiasts from many places met and renewed their resolve to extend the great work of Francisco Tarrega for the guitar.

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A Centenary brochure written by Emilio Pujol and most artistically produced, contains an important treatise on Francisco Tarrega (in Spanish).

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In Barcelona two Centenary concerts were organized by Peña Guitarrística Tarrega. On November 15th Luis Sanchez Granada gave a recital which included a group of Tarrega's works. The concert on November 30th was in two parts, the first being a recital of guitar solos played by Paquita

Bernal. The second part was the first performance of a Suite "Tempora Memora Splendida" for four guitars by Graciano Tarragó. The players were Renata Tarragó, Mercedes Crehuet, Paquita Bernal and Graciano Tarragó. The Suite is in five movements—Preludio, Minueto, Gavota, Sarabanda and Giga—and was brilliantly successful.

The latest concert in honour of Tarrega (the 43rd anniversary of his death), was a very successful recital on December 28th by Ramon Cueto, winner of the 'Peña Guitarrística Tarrega' Prize for 1952.

IN OTHER LANDS

ART is universal, even though it may have a national aspect. The guitar has become a world instrument, so the Centenary of the birth of Francisco Tarrega was celebrated in many lands. Here is a summary of the reports received up to the time of going to press.

ARGENTINA. The Asociacion Guitaristica Argentina organized a lecture-recital in honour of the Centenary of the birth of Francisco Tarrega. "The Guitar and its Origin" was the subject of the lecture given by Sara Supervielle Broques. To illustrate the development of guitar music she played compositions by Narvaez, Sanz, de Visée, Sor, Granados and four works of Tarrega.

AUSTRIA. The Centenary was suitably honoured in Vienna and Innsbruck and by other Guitar Associations in the provinces. Prof. Jacobus Ortner came into contact with Tarrega about 50 years ago and since then he has frequently played Tarrega's compositions and taught them during his long career as teacher of the guitar at the State Academy.

BRAZIL. In Sao Paulo two concerts were given, the programmes of which consisted entirely of works by Francisco Tarrega.

On November 21st, at the Brazilian Guitar Association's concert at the National School of Music the soloists were Milton Rodrigues, Osmar Abreu, Antonio Rebelo, Dr. Othon Saleiro and Carlos Collet.

On the following day the Cultural Association of the Guitar presented Pepe Martinez, Aparecido J. dos Santos, Irineu Dutra, Ronoel Simoes, José Lansac and Alfredo Scupinari in music by Tarrega.

In Santos the celebration was opened by Dr. Antonio Vidal Gabás, Spanish Consul. A biographical lecture on Francisco Tarrega was given by Prof. Isaias Savio and was followed by a concert of Tarrega's works played by members of the Guitar Centre "Jose de Patrocínio" of Santos.

BRITAIN. A long and interesting article appeared in "The Times" on November 28th under the heading "The Guitar—a Scholar Gypsy" by the music critic of this important newspaper. The opening paragraph pays tribute to Francisco Tarrega and mentions that 'whether by accident or design' Andres Segovia gave a recital at the Royal Festival Hall (the large new concert hall in London) prompt to the day of his Centenary.

At Cheltenham the Classic Guitar Circle held a special meeting at which a short biography of Tarrega by Prof. Emilio Pujol was read. This was followed by a programme of Tarrega's works played by members. A report of these commemorations appeared in the "Gloucestershire Echo."

EGYPT. On November 18th Cairo Radio broadcast a talk on "Tarrega—his life and contribution to the classic Spanish guitar." The script of the talk was written by Miguel Abloniz who followed it with a recital of compositions by Tarrega—Capricho Arabe, Recuerdos, etc.

FRANCE. "Les Amis de la Guitare" (Directeur: M. André Verdier, of Paris) issued 1,000 souvenir cards bearing the portrait of Francisco Tarrega and also a biographical treatise written by Prof. Emilio Pujol (President d'Honneur of the Society).

At its meeting on Nov. 21st there was an exhibition of souvenirs of the Maestro—programmes, autographs, circulars, etc. The pièce de resistance was the guitar which Monsieur Verdier has treasured for more than 30 years, because it formerly belonged to Francisco Tarrega. It was made in 1906 by Enrique Garcia and bears the number '74.'

Tarrega played on this guitar at a concert in Paris organized by the guitarists Jules and Alfred Cottin. A message from their sister Mlle. Madeleine Cottin was read at the meeting and some of Tarrega's music was played.

GERMANY. The Guitarist Society of Munich (Gitarristischen-Vereinigung) celebrated the Centenary with a broadcast and a festival concert-recital by Marga Bäuml. Its publication "Der Gitarrefreund" contained special articles about Tarrega. A souvenir portrait card of the Maestro was also issued.

GREECE. Professor Charalambos Ekmetzoglou, of Athens Conservatoire broadcast a programme of Tarrega's works. An article on Tarrega with portrait appeared in a leading Greek music magazine.

ITALY. "L'Arte Chitarristica" (Nos. 34-35) contained an article on Francisco Tarrega. The latest 'biographical card' in its 'Guitarist Index' is of Tarrega (with portrait).

SOUTH AFRICA. Under the patronage of the Envoy Extraordinary Minister Plenipotentiary for Spain in S. Africa, Señor don Miguel Espinos y Bosch, the Tarrega Centenary was celebrated by a guitar recital at Johannesburg. Jorge Ryss played 25 of Tarrega's compositions and works dedicated to Tarrega. Mr. M. L. Johnston read a paper on the Life of Francisco Tarrega. Four enthusiasts made the long journey from Pretoria for the celebrations which were the subject of articles in the South African press.

SPAIN. (See special article).

TURKEY. Guitar strings made by R. Esenbel, of Istanbul, were packed in a Centenary souvenir envelope bearing the portrait of F. Tarrega and the names of some of his compositions.

U.S.A. The Society of the Classic Guitar (New York) held a Commemoration meeting at La Zambra, which was filled to capacity. A short biographical sketch of Tarrega was given by Karl Noell and some of Tarrega's music was played by Alexander Bellow and Julio Prol.

VENEZUELA. The newspaper "El Universal" (21st Nov.) contained a brilliant article on the 'Centenario de Francisco Tarrega' from the pen of Señora Enriqueta Fernandez de Guerrero. It extended over four columns and was illustrated by a portrait of the Maestro.

GUITAR MUSIC

THE chief requirement of teachers and students of the guitar is certainly music which is interesting and good yet not too difficult to play. "The Guitarist's Hour" (Schotts) provides a selection of short pieces by 19th century guitarists, graded in three books. Other music suitable for the student has recently been compiled by Iimgard Lehrer-Carlé and published by Transatlantic Press, Box 23, 420 West 119th Street, New York 27 U.S.A.—"20 Easy Guitar Pieces" and "Three Easy Dances by Heinrich Albert."

A grade more advanced than these are two new arrangements by Prof. Karl Scheit: "Partita in A minor" by J. A. Logy (1643-1721) and "Studies in Tone Formation based on old Tunes." These are very playable and the latter is an extremely valuable introduction to the production of tone colour. They are published by Universal Edition (Vienna) and obtainable from Alfred A. Kalmus, 24 Gt. Pulteney Street, London, W.1.

Ricordi Americana (Buenos Aires) have republished at an appropriate time Llobet's arrangement of the Carcassi Studies op. 60. Among other items issued by this firm is a Bailecito by Bucharado, transcribed by J. Gómez Crespo (composer of "Nortena" recorded by Segovia).

ALEXANDER TANSMAN

ALEXANDER TANSMAN was born in Lodz, Poland, in 1897; here he began his studies for piano and composition, later continuing his education in Warsaw, the city which first recognized his distinctive gift as a composer. Like many Polish artists he subsequently went to Paris. From there he toured extensively as composer-conductor and composer-pianist, and built his world-wide reputation.

Tansman has composed piano concertos, operas, ballets, songs, etc. His first guitar solo, a Mazurka, was edited by Segovia and published by Schott & Co. several years ago. The Cavatina (recently published by Schott & Co.) which won him the prize of the Chigiana Academy (Siena), has been included by Segovia in recent recitals. This composition exploits the resources of the guitar to great advantage and thus is always interesting to listen to—or to play.

Irving Schwerke has written: "In him can be found a strong mixture of poetry which is the heritage of his race, that gracious tenderness which will recognise no exaggeration or frivolity, and that slow sadness . . . with a strong crisp sense of dynamic movement which is his own."

SEGOVIA AT CHELTENHAM

AFTER his brilliantly successful recital at Cheltenham Town Hall on November 25th, Andres Segovia attended an informal reception to meet members of Cheltenham Classic Guitar Circle at the Queens Hotel. Portraits of guitarists, past and present, served to start the conversational ball rolling and in the course of the evening many questions were asked and answered by the Maestro in a genial, kindly manner—with a sense of humour which frequently evoked happy laughter.

The guitar—and strings

Asked about his guitar Segovia said that Hermann Hauser experimented on the model of a Ramirez guitar until he made in 1937 the one Segovia now uses. In spite of several hours playing each day it has never had to be refretted. Segovia considered that it was necessary for the fingerboard of a good guitar to be made of ebony so that it does not warp or wear out.

Asked about the number of strings on the guitar he said that just as on the violin four strings gave a perfect balance, the six strings of the guitar give an aesthetic equilibrium so that extra strings are not necessary.

Segovia said he did not like a covered third string because each string has its own tone colour and a covered third is too much like the fourth string in tone.

Segovia told of his troubles before nylon strings were used, saying that in tropical countries he had to change his first string every half hour. In contrast to this he said that his first string of nylon (Augustine) had been on his guitar for four years.

A second instrument

Segovia recommended the study of the piano 'with its neutral tone-colour' for obtaining a knowledge of musical theory, but he disapproved of the 'cello as an alternative instrument to the guitar because of the effect of the thick strings on the sensitivity of the finger-tips.

Music—old and modern

There was some interesting discussion on old and modern music. Segovia said that the best of the older guitar music was that of Sor. In the old music the dissonances were the exception but in modern music the consonances are the exception. *Bad* modern music is not suitable for the guitar but *good* modern music often is. Asked to recommend some not-too-difficult modern guitar music Segovia advised the music of Manuel Ponce. He considered the *Folias* and *Fugue* by Ponce to be the greatest modern work for the guitar and in the same class as the *Bach Chaconne*.

Gaspar Cassadó

Members wanted to know more about Cassadó whose 'Leyenda Catalana et Sardana' was very much enjoyed in the recital. Before they achieved fame Andres Segovia, Gaspar Cassadó and José Iturbi (the pianist) were students together. Cassadó has won fame as a violoncellist (he was a pupil of Pau Casals) and as a composer. He is keenly interested in the guitar but does not play the instrument.

The footstool •

To the question "What is the correct height for a footstool?" Segovia smilingly replied "Perhaps in a thousand years guitarists will be born with adjustable footstools, but for the present it depends on the individual and the height of the chair."

Flamenco

Asked if people of Spanish race or blood had any advantage with the guitar Segovia said that the guitar is for people of all lands, but Spanish folk music is for Spaniards only.

Gramophone-recording

Segovia told of the great trouble that is taken in making gramophone records so that the tones of the guitar are reproduced as faithfully as possible. Long-playing records require a tremendous repertoire—49 items were played in making just a few of these—but he thought those recently made were more successful than ever before.

It was within half an hour of midnight when this unforgettable gathering dispersed. All felt they had been in the presence of a very great personality.

GUITARIST-MUSICIANSHIP

By Joan Prior

MOST thinking people will agree that there is truth to be discerned in the statement that "Beauty lies in the eye of the beholder." We may also find interesting focus for thought in the supposition that "Music lives in the soul of its interpreter."

No real music can be come by easily, and no satisfaction in music may be obtained except by understanding and perseverance, unless there is the deep-seated natural gift arising through generations of musical outpouring that comes to some as easily as breathing. Great music cannot be produced by soulless nations or individuals.

Where the craving for beauty in music exists, it is bound to bring the quality of reverence for that which is greater and deeper than the personal. The lover of music will thus be prepared to work and discipline himself and listen: he will be capable of realizing that common self-will and easily obtained effects are cheap and of no lasting satisfaction.

One of the creative qualities of the Classic Guitar is that it does not attract and cannot be played by those who seek easy achievement. Another is that, like the singing voice, it is very revealing of the soul or essence of the performer. It is right that every beauty-loving amateur player should be as capable at times of expressing satisfying upliftment in music as a great virtuoso continually may be. But the concert artist naturally has a much greater opportunity and capacity for this, owing to faultless technique and a life dedicated to music, even without the enhancement of a warm humanity which is one of the ingredients of that mystical "star quality" which places certain musicians amongst the exceptional benefactors of their fellows.

Nevertheless even the humblest guitar player can improve his own quality by pursuing a logical course of ever broadening understanding and appreciation of music, beauty and life.

REGINO SAINZ DE LA MAZA

ALTHOUGH he has given recitals in many cities of Europe and South America, Regino Sainz de la Maza had not played in New York until November 21st when he appeared at the Town Hall.

He showed himself to be a fine, sensitive artist with good interpretation and a very wide repertoire, from which he selected the interesting and well balanced programme which follows:

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|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Diferencias | Navaez (1538) |
| Passo e mezzo | Anon. Ital. (16th C.) |
| Fantasia | Mudarra (1546) |
| 2 Danzas Cervantinas | Sanz |
| Sonata | Scarlatti |
| Loure | Bach |
| Thème Variè | Sor |
| 2 Mazurkas | Tarrega |
| Reverie | Tarrega |
| Homenaje a Debussy | Falla |
| La Fille Aux Cheveux de Lin | Debussy |
| Tango de la Casada Infel | V. Asencio |
| Habanera | Eduardo Sainz de la Maza |
| Cancion y Danza | Regino Sainz de la Maza |
| Rumores de la Caleta | Albeniz |

The group of early music was especially pleasing thanks to the careful interpretation with which these compositions were played. The more modern works also won appreciative applause partly because of their artistic arrangement for the guitar. Eduardo Sainz de la Maza, who composed the Habanera, is a brother of the recitalist.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS: We regret that much other news has had to be held over until the next issue through lack of space. "Guitar News" is always glad to receive reports of guitarist activities and also short articles.

OLGA COELHO IN BRITAIN

A LARGE audience at Wigmore Hall, London, welcomed a return visit of the Brazilian singer-guitarist on November 18th in a programme consisting largely of folk songs, but with a very important group of songs by classical composers—Scarlatti, Dowland, etc.

One could listen to either her rich soprano voice or her artistic guitar playing with enjoyment, but the two combined give the feeling of ecstatic delight. Olga Coelho gave several broadcasts during her visit before departing for Scandinavia.

PORTRAIT OF SEGOVIA

A FINE, artistic portrait of Andres Segovia was taken by Mr. Douglas Glass, exclusive photographer to "The Sunday Times." Copies may be obtained from The Photographic Department, "The Sunday Times," Kemsley House, London, W.C.I.

Size: 10 x 8 inches, mounted 15/- (unmounted 10/6), remittance with order.

MEMBERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

Every member may have a 25 word notice inserted free in "Guitar News" for each subscription paid. Extra notices may be included at the following rates: up to 25 words 2/6; from 26 to 50 words (Maximum) 5/-.

GUITAR LESSONS: Elements of technique, music and harmony after Tarrega, Llobet, Pujol, Segovia. Few vacancies: Chesnakov, 24a Cathcart Road, London S.W.10. (Tel. FLA. 4354).

NEW YORK FOLK-GUITAR CLUB, Irmgard Lehrer-Carlé, Director, Box 23, 420 W. 119 St. New York 27, N.Y., U.S.A. Instruction in Folk and Classic Guitar—special methods. Publications "20 Easy Guitar Pieces for Beginners" \$1; "6 Folk Songs with Guitar accompaniment," \$1.25; "3 Easy Dances for Guitar," \$1.00. Bi-monthly Newsletter \$1 per year. Specimen free.

SCHALLER-SCHEIT Guitar Method (English text). Modern technique. Original studies. Two parts, 6/- each, plus postage. Alfred A. Kalmus, 24 Great Pulteney Street, London W.1.

INTERESTING guitar music recently received for C.G.A. Funds. Send for list to Hon. Organiser, C.G.A. (International), 47 Clarence Street, Cheltenham (Glos.), England.

THOSE BROKEN NAILS!

IF you make use of your nails in playing the guitar what do you do to prevent or cure brittleness? A broken nail is a very serious matter to the professional guitarist and an annoyance to the amateur or student. "Guitar News" would be pleased to hear from readers how they keep their nails in good condition.

Most chemists can supply a proprietary nail strengthener. Mr. C. J. Hope-Johnstone tells us he has found the following successful:

Massage the nails well with purified castor oil (odourless), then paint with colourless iodine leaving it to dry on.

Of course, nails should always be filed and polished, never cut with scissors.

BLUE RIBBON

CONGRATULATIONS to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Carlos, of Singapore, Malaya, on the birth of their first-born son Jorge José Luis in Madrid, November, 1952.

MEMBERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS (continued)

SPANISH GUITAR CENTRE: Spanish Guitar tuition in the method of Tarrega-Segovia, by Len Williams. Courses for advanced players and beginners. 12/13 Little Newport St., W.C. 2. (Tel.: GER. 6457).

THE GUITAR IN SPAIN

By Jane Rutherford Maitland, A.R.M.C.M.

ANDALUSIA was the corner of Spain to which Manuel de Falla belonged and the former Kingdom of Spain. Andalusia was the land of guitarists, now, alas, gramophones and wireless have more or less silenced its voice.

When I was a child, aged five, my parents took me to Málaga; my father became director of the two largest cotton mills there and I lived in Spain for fifteen years.

From the very first I was fascinated by the guitar; from open windows and cafes in the street one heard the sound of guitars. The Andalusian plays the guitar as one breathes; the instrument is really part of himself. The strings vibrate and live under his fingers.

My first teacher was Pepe Rodriguez, a pupil of Juan Parga (1843-1899). He was a very fine guitarist and teacher. I found it very difficult to hold the guitar in the position he insisted was correct; the fingers of the left hand had to fall on the strings firmly, but not from a great height, and the right hand fingers not to move from the first joint but from the second. At the same time there must be no stiffness. First Rodriguez taught scales and tunes by ear so that one was at ease with the instrument before playing from notes.

Pepe Rodriguez was a pupil of the great guitarist Parga who could do marvels with the guitar. Parga could play equally as well holding the guitar at his back as he could when playing in the normal position. Parga was a big swarthy individual. People plied him with wine and the more he drank the better he played. His preludes, cadenzas and arabesques roused the greatest enthusiasm. They were so difficult no one would attempt to imitate him; his tone was never harsh but rich and full. At times the guitar sounded like a 'cello.

In Andalusia the patio or courtyard is the centre of Spanish home life; beautiful flowers grown in pots are set in groups. I used to visit a house near us when there was a Fiesta. Twenty or more people sat in a circle with the guitarist in the centre. He improvised, the guests sat silent then suddenly a voice singing "Cante Hondo" would break in, vocalizing very beautifully. I remember the words of a Cante Hondo.

"Not with you nor without you
Can I bear my life.
With you, you kill me,
Without you, I die."

Each guest would sing in turn, trying to make original improvisations, the one who could make the longest variation gained most applause. Everyone seemed able to play the guitar. Hours would pass in this way and we felt relaxed and happy.

I hope to return to Spain one day. What shall I find?

CLASSIC GUITAR ASSOCIATION (INTERNATIONAL)

(A non-profit-making Organisation)

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