

21ST LIECHTENSTEINER GITARRENTAGE

A Report by THÉRÈSE WASSILY SABA



PHOTOS: PAUL TRUMMER

Alvaro Pierri and string quartet.

THIS WAS my first visit to Liechtenstein, a small country of just 160 square kilometres, which has borders with Austria and Switzerland and naturally, also my first visit to the Ligita guitar festival – Liechtensteiner Gitarrentage – in its 21st year. It is an ideal sized festival in that it has a relatively small attendance but is big in terms of the artists invited; this means a more intimate experience particularly during the masterclasses. Alvaro Pierri, Dušan Bogdanovic, the American lutenist Paul O'Dette and the flamenco guitarist Manolo Franco all gave excellent evening recitals as well as masterclasses. The unexpected performers but certainly very welcome at Ligita, were the Gruber-Maklar guitar duo who stepped in for the Duo Melis.

Alvaro Pierri played the opening concert with string quartet with good quality performances of the Castelnuovo-Tedesco quintet, Op. 143, the Giuliani quintet, Op. 30 and for solo guitar, some movements from the *Jazz Sonata* by Dušan Bogdanovic. Although this is the anniversary year, celebrating the 250th anniversary of the birth of John Dowland, the lutenist Paul O'Dette has just been making a recording of music by recording the music of Francesco da Milano for Harmonia Mundi and included some of his music in his inspiring concert as well. The concerts were held in different venues each evening, so we could appreciate as much of Liechtenstein as possible; Paul O'Dette's concert was in the perfect church setting of the Kirche Mauren.



Paul O'Dette.



Alvaro Pierri and Dušan Bogdanovic

Christian Gruber and Peter Maklar have been playing in duo for over 20 years and they have a very refined musical understanding between each other and a good sense of humour. I thoroughly enjoyed their dramatic performance, which included the *Sonata Fantasia* by Dušan Bogdanovic, works by Mertz, their excellent arrangements of works by Scarlatti, Mozart and Villa-Lobos. The flamenco guitarist Manolo Franco performing with second guitarist Miguel Angel Laguna, the singer Jeromo Segura and the dancer David Perez played a programme designed for a classical guitar audience, so that there was not so much singing and dancing: the dancer and singer mostly provided percussion with *palmas*. Manolo Franco has an impressive technique and his musical ideas show a variety of influences and are strongly individual but never move too far away from the central focus of traditional flamenco.

The guitar duo of Augustin Wiedemann and 'Kosho' (Michael Kosho Koschorreck from the popular German band called *Söhne Mannheims*) played light repertoire, including some of Kosho's own compositions and some John Dowland sung in imitation of the musician 'Sting'. The Venezuelan ensemble called *Garufa!* with two guitarists, violin, double bass and singer, performed an evening of tango music; they were very good musicians but decided to add a theatrical part to their performance, which was sometimes amusing.

There was a series of short 6pm concerts featuring various performers such as the Lebanese 'ud player and guitarist



Manolo Franco and his flamenco ensemble.

Mahmoud Turkmani, who teaches the classical guitar and 'ud (Arabic lute) at the Conservatorium in Bern; he played improvised Arabic music on the 'ud, which were very enjoyable and improvisations in a modern flamenco style on his flamenco guitar, which was not so interesting. Dušan Bogdanovic gave a very good lecture-recital talking about his own works for the guitar, playing a few solo pieces and then playing a duo improvisation with Alvaro Pierri – they have a very good music a understanding, so the result was a good conversation via music. The young British duo of Tom Ellis and Laura Snowden, who had won the duo competition at the festival, played pieces by Antoine de Lhoyer and by the Australian guitarist/composer Phillip Houghton; and the young Mexican guitarist Oman Kaminsky, who won



The jury of the competition (from left): Brigitte Zaczek, Tomasz Zawierucha, Anders Miolin, Stefan Hackl and Dieter Kreidler (Head of Jury).



Walter Würdinger conducting the orchestra.

the 2012 Iserlohn Competition played this concert as part of his prize.

We also had the pleasure of hearing the local ensemble of guitarists Klaus Karl and Gerhard Leitner playing folk music with Michael Killinger on zither and Matthäus Killinger on double bass player, at both a 6pm concert and also after a special dinner, where they were joined by Stefan Hackl playing on a double-necked guitar.

Ligita organises an international guitar competition every two years; this was the 7th Ligita International Guitar Competition. The first two rounds are not open to the public but there were 16 competitors in the first round. The four finalists were Eduard Leata from Romania, Anton Baranov from Russia, João Carlos Victor Alves from Brazil and Damien Lancelle from France. The

winner of the 7th Ligita International Guitar Competition was João Carlos Victor Alves from Brazil; Second Prize went to Damien Lancelle; and the Third Prize was shared by Eduard Leata and Anton Baranov. Part of the First Prize was a guitar by the Japanese guitar-maker Yuichi Imai.

The teaching staff included the German guitarist Dieter Kreidler who has written many guitar tutor books for young players, the Polish guitarist Tomasz Zawieruch who teaches at the nearby State Vorarlberg Conservatoire in Austria, Stefan Hackl who is a specialist in folk-style music as well as classical guitar and researches and writes about early guitar music, Anders Miolin who teaches at the Zurich University of the Arts, Brigitte Zaczek, who is the niece of Luise Walker and taught for many



Minister Dr. Mauro Pedrazzini giving the First Prize to João Carlos Victor Alves.



Yuichi Imai with João Carlos Victor Alves.



Almost everyone!

years at the University of Music and the Performing Arts in Vienna, the German guitarist Augustin Wiedemann, guitarist and composer Michael Buchrainer, Mahmoud Turkmani, Manolo Franco, and Walter Würdinger, who also conducted the daily guitar orchestra sessions. Every morning at 9am there was a warm-up session for the festival participants – each day with a different teacher, so that they could experience different guitarists' approach to warming-up.

Guitar-makers had a strong presence during the festival, not only in the foyer exhibition throughout the week but also several performance sessions were organised, so that we could get an idea of how each guitar sounded on the concert platform. The guitar-makers including Yuichi Imai (the Gruber-Maklar Duo played on his guitars), Curt Claus Volgt, Karl Heinz-Römmich, Marlo Gropp, Kolya Panhuyzen, Pepe Toldo, Norbert Hammerer, Dennis Tolz, Johannes Schenk, Matthias Tilzer, Gabriel Martin and Matthias Hennig. The well-stocked Trekel music shop was open throughout the festival.

The 22nd Liechtensteiner Gitarrentage will be from 5–12 July 2014. The guest artists include: David Russell, SoloDuo, Alvaro Pierri, Roland Dyens, Pablo Márquez, Leon Koudelak, Manolo Franco and his flamenco ensemble, Han Jonkers, Walter Würdinger and Stefan Hackl. The Festival is directed by Michael Buchrainer and Elmar Gangl with the invaluable support of the Liechtensteiner Gitarrenzirkel: the president Rita Kieber-Beck, working together with Johanna Noser, Walter Kieber, Albert Kindle, Manfred Biedermann and Martha Marzek.

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