



Lanarkshire GUITAR & MANDOLIN Association

Newsletter **Spring 2007**

LGMA is a recognised Scottish Charity No. SC 032550



LGMA Residential 2007

They say that every picture tells a story...



... so if this picture is anything to go by, we feel confident in saying that this year's Residential at Wiston Lodge (March) was a complete success.

It was probably more intensive than ever before with tutors and participants being fairly exhausted by the end of the course, hence Nigel Gatherer collapsing to the floor, but have no fear as participant and trained nurse Donna was there to offer resuscitation. Participants travelled from all parts of the country including Ireland and we are grateful to them for their hard work and their good spirits. As Keith, a mandolin beginner, said:

"I have never ever taken part in an event where absolutely everyone, participants, tutors and organisers were so helpful and friendly... I'll definitely be back".

The feedback we have received so far has been very positive and the general feeling seems to be that the level of tuition was very high. For that we would like to thank the tutors Barbara Pommerenke-Steel, Nigel Gatherer, Jens-Uwe Popp and Jochen Ross for their dedication, hard work and staying power.

In 2008 we have a lot of major events taking place and were therefore thinking of giving the Residential a rest. However, after a "protest" by some of the participants it looks like... "See you again next year!"

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**LGMA Membership 2007
is now available.**

**Download a form from
www.mandolinscotland.org or
email lgma_info@yahoo.co.uk
and have your newsletter
delivered to your door.**

YOUTH MATTERS!

Tuition (Children and Adults!)

If you are looking to learn to play the mandolin, or if you already play and want to brush up on your technique then here is a list of tutors in Lanarkshire and beyond.

All of the following tutors are recommended by the LGMA.

Name	Area	Instrument(s)	Contact Details
Barbara Pommerenke-Steel	Hamilton	Classical Mandolin/ Classical Guitar	pommerenke_steel@yahoo.co.uk
Alan Jones	East Kilbride	Mandolin	07981 116938 jonaj@blueyonder.co.uk
Graeme Thomson	East Kilbride	Mandolin	07890 444184 graemethomson@hotmail.co.uk
Les Donaghy	West Dunbartonshire/ East Kilbride	Mandolin	07931 692277 les@donaghy.org.uk
Eddie Smith	Hamilton	Mandolin	01698 424032 all.smiths@btopenworld.com
Nigel Gatherer	Crieff	Mandolin	nigel@gatherer.net

EGMYO

The **EGMYO** (European Guitar and Mandolin Youth Orchestra) took place between the 1st and 9th of April 2007 in Ferrara, Italy.

This year, two members of the LGMA, guitar player **Michael Paterson** and mandolin player **Graeme Thomson** participated in the event.

Read all about their experience at this exciting event in the next edition of the LGMA Newsletter.



Get involved and share your success!

We want to hear from young people! If you have a story about your musical experiences, awards or prizes you have won, or shows you are in, let us know and we can feature them in the Newsletter and share your success!

Email your stories and pictures to: graemethomson@hotmail.co.uk

Congratulations to Mango and Da Capo Alba member **Nicholas Milligan** who won the **International Classical Guitar Association Trophy** in the 2007 Glasgow Music Festival in March.

Congratulations to **Craig McMurray** and **Greig Taylor** who both competed in the **South Lanarkshire Music Festival**.

Greig also participated in the **Supercounty Show** in March 2007.

YOUTH MATTERS!

Youth Profile – Graeme Thomson

We continue our series of profiles on young LGMA Members with mandolin player Graeme Thomson. Read how Graeme progressed from being a new player to winning a national award.

It was in 1999 when the LGMA visited Kirktonholme Primary School (East Kilbride) to carry out our first "School Mandolin Workshop" to generate interest in the instrument. Graeme was a Primary 7 pupil and was inspired enough by our visit to come along to the first young people's mandolin class at East Kilbride Arts Centre. (He actually says he just came along as he had nothing better to do... it was a good decision!)



2006 – Louis De Bernières
(Author of Captain Corelli's Mandolin)
presents Graeme with the BMG Solo
Mandolin Trophy

Graeme took to the mandolin and continued to attend. Opting for music as one of his Standard Grade subjects gave him a real boost and his all-round music abilities developed greatly. He was, as far as we know, the first pupil in Scotland to use the mandolin for Standard Grade, Higher and Advanced Higher music exams. Graeme also sat Graded exams with Victoria College London which, amongst other things helped him to prepare for the school exams.

For many years Graeme was an active member of the Boys' Brigade (you have to be when your mum is a leader) achieving the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award.

It is safe to say that his main interests are now centred around music and although he is now a "former pupil" of Duncanrig Secondary school, he still attends one day a week on a voluntary basis to help in the music department. In 2004 and 2006 Graeme took first position for mandolin solo at the British Banjo Mandolin and Guitar Federation Rally.

Playing in both Mango and Da Capo Alba (the youth and adult orchestras of the LGMA), Graeme is a valued member of our Association taking on responsibility for a variety of tasks including being a committee member and newsletter editor, tutoring in mandolin classes and recently completing the UK's first course for mandolin teachers.

It looks like this young man has a promising career ahead of him... he has just been accepted into RSAMD (Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama)... The first person to be accepted with mandolin as their primary instrument... a super achievement for Graeme and a tremendous boost to the acceptance of the mandolin.

Composing Competition

Do you want to write your own music or do you already?

Do you fancy having a chance to have your music published in the newsletter?

All you need to do is log onto the website, www.mandolinscotland.org, and click on the **Youth Competition** link.

Once you are there you will find everything you need to begin the competition (including entry details). You don't even need to have composed anything before, as there are some handy hints on the page for you!

Come and have a go! Why always play other people's music when you can make your own?



The Mandolin Downstroke

by Eddie Smith
with thanks to Keith Harris and Frank Scheurle

I had been playing mandolin seriously for about three years before I had my first encounter with 'The Downstroke', something which you might find strange but there are many players of mandolin who play away happily without any thought about what their **Right Hand** is doing. My own theory about this is that because many mandolin players come to the instrument after they have learned to play guitar, they assume that the Right Hand is OK and start to obsess about what their Left Hand is doing.

This is an error, because it is in fact the Right Hand that makes the sound, and the place to begin to improve the sound you make is with the Right Hand, and the stroke that must be developed is the Downstroke. I had a lesson with Frank Scheurle, an excellent mandolin player and tutor, in November 2005, during which he introduced me to what I now call '**The Downstroke Game**'. This is how it goes. (I will assume you know how to sit and hold the instrument properly, which is a big assumption, but...)

Step 1

Hold the plectrum between your thumb and first finger, so that it will strike the pair of strings at an **ANGLE**, not flat. (Don't play anything yet, there's more.)

Step 2

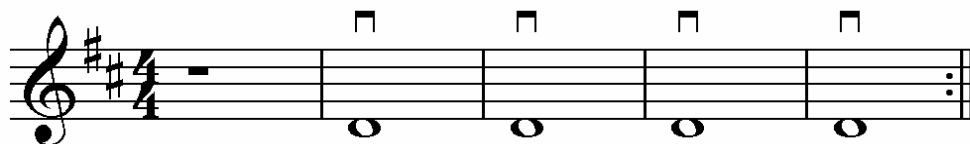
Hold the plectrum so that it has a **SLANT**, meaning that the broader end is LOWER than the tip. (Don't play yet, there's still more.)

Step 3

In order to ensure that we strike both of the strings effectively, we begin our movement with 'The Resting Position'. The plectrum should Rest on the string **below** the one that we wish to strike. So, we rest on the A string, and we will strike the D string open.

Step 4

Using a metronome, and counting in 4 i.e., 1-2-3-4 very slowly (about 50bpm) we make the following moves; Rest on 1-2-, Raise the plectrum so that it is above the D string on 3-, Hold on 4- and Strike the D string on the second 1 (with the correct angle and slant) and return to the Resting Position on the A string.



In musical notation, it would look like this above.

Notice the symbol for the Downstroke, the rest in the first bar and that the value of the note is a semibreve, meaning the note should be allowed to ring, and that it is to be repeated until you get a sound you are happy with. The physics of what we are trying to do is to make the strings vibrate vertically towards the soundboard, thus we play down and into them, not across them.

This is the basic game, but there are other aspects to consider. First of all the wrist action; all of the movement must come from the wrist and what must be aimed at is for the wrist to allow the hand to fall, rather than push, so that the key action is raising the wrist and letting it fall. Keith Harris, in his book '**The Mandolin Game**' discusses this action in terms of "switching off the power" and allowing the hand to fall. Elsewhere, he has also tried to describe this action as a 'shake' of the hand. The problem is that it is difficult to describe, but much easier to demonstrate.

During the first weekend of the BMG Teachers' Course in February 2006 we had a very interesting demonstration of the variety of outcomes which can follow from **The Downstroke Game**. Bear in mind that everybody in the room was an experienced player and all that was required was for us to do was to play an open D string, at the same time, following the count – we couldn't do it! We could not play an open D string together using a good downstroke. Things got worse when we were asked to do it individually; one person completely missed the string. Why was this? Well, when you analyse a movement, then you become aware of how many parts there are to it, and it can be difficult to maintain focus on everything and of course, it requires practice.

The thing about the Downstroke is that it is the most important stroke used on the mandolin and the game works much better with beginners than with established players. There is immediate pleasure for a beginner to hear how much improved the sound is when they play a good downstroke. They have nothing to do on the Left Hand, which eases the tension and they have no preconceived ideas about what they can achieve. Established players, on the other hand, find it uncomfortable to have their technique stripped back to the basics. I suppose I was lucky in that I had not been playing very long and so was open to reflecting upon technique and how to improve.

Finally, once you have mastered the Downstroke, you are then able to turn your attention to its mirror image, the Upstroke and then Down/Up 2:2 and then Down/Up 2:1 and then... and then... and then...

Look out for more articles on mandolin and guitar technique over the next issues.

If you have any questions or queries about mandolin/guitar technique that you would like answered in future editions of the newsletter, contact the editor on graemethomson@hotmail.co.uk

East Kilbride Mandolin Classes

Last October, the LGMA started two children's beginners' classes at the East Kilbride Arts Centre on Tuesdays, with Eddie Smith as tutor, assisted by Graeme Thomson. Classes have gone well and some students clearly have an aptitude for the instrument.

The first term to December was taken up mainly by learning the basics about holding the instrument, good posture and learning to make a good sound as well as music theory.

Since January 2007, good progress has been made towards learning a piece of music. In the evening class there are three very promising students whose progress is notable.

On Tuesday 20th February, a new adult class started in the East Kilbride Arts Centre. The class currently has fifteen participants, and is also taught by Eddie and Graeme.



East Kilbride Classical Guitar Classes

After the summer break, we intend to start a new children's Classical Guitar class. If you would like to register your interest for this class, please contact mandolinscotland@yahoo.co.uk about information on when the class will start. It will be held in the East Kilbride Arts Centre with tutor Barbara Pommerenke-Steel. Information will also be made available on the Tuition section of our website www.mandolinscotland.org



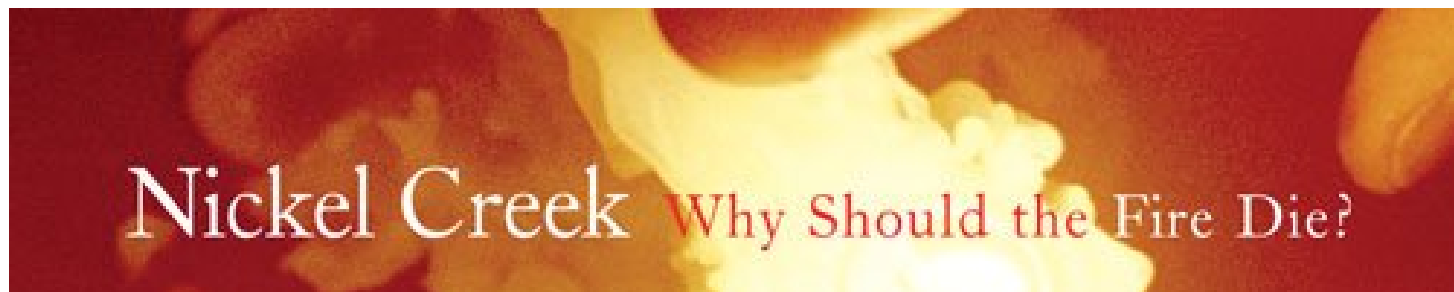
Hamilton Rock and Pop Guitar Classes

On Thursday 29th March the Hamilton Rock and Pop Guitar classes held a concert. See our website www.mandolinscotland.org and check out the summer edition of the LGMA Newsletter for a full review!

CD REVIEW: Nickel Creek – “Why Should the Fire Die?”

Reviewed by Jochen Roß

Chris Thile – mandolin (amongst others)
Sara Watkins – fiddle (amongst others)
Sean Watkins – guitar (amongst others)



In 2001 I asked an old friend of mine from America whether he could give me a little help in finding a good Bluegrass band, because there were so many around that I just couldn't find the right one for me.

He said to me, “**Nickel Creek & Chris Thile – hear that!**” and so I bought Chris Thile's “Not all who wander are lost,” and the first Nickel Creek album. When I first heard them I was totally blown away and since that time Nickel Creek and Chris Thile have always been big inspirations.

They've now released their third album, after endless touring, after selling lots of records, after winning lots of prizes just asking, “**Why Should the Fire Die?**” and for me this record is another big step in the development and history of this unique band. They again open the style of music they play to jazz, pop and rock elements and so to a wider audience.

The mandolin riff in “When in Rome” sets us on a musical journey through fourteen different songs, fourteen different worlds.

On songs like “Scotch & Chocolate” and “Stumptown” we find the last remains of the Bluegrass/Folk Music roots of the band. The always **beautiful** vocal arrangements find their peak on “Eveline” and “Why Should The Fire Die?” For the first time the band works with drum sounds and more modern sound effects, a straight forward Pop song like “Somebody More Like You” meets the almost psychedelic rock song “Helena” and in between we can find wonderful relaxation with **Bob Dylan's** “Tomorrow is a long time”.

Nickel Creek left their roots without forgetting them. They met many styles without copying them but created their own unique style. This album is a mirror of the trio's maturity and their elevation above traditional and musical borders.



On the 6th of February 2007 Chris Thile was named the BBC Folk Musician of the Year!

Check out sound bites of Nickel Creek on www.myspace.com/nickelcreek or www.nickelcreek.com

If you would like to see a CD reviewed in the Newsletter, or you want to submit a review, we would be delighted to hear from you. Just email graemethomson@hotmail.co.uk and we will endeavour to include your suggestions.

South Lanarkshire Council's Community Service Award 2007



Congratulations to Barbara and Ian Pommerenke-Steel, whose efforts in the LGMA have not gone unnoticed! They were presented this award on the Thursday 8th February 2007 for "outstanding service to the community".



They were nominated by their local councillor Mrs Mary Smith who surprised Barbara a recent orchestra practise on 31st January (which also happened to be a special birthday for Barbara... age withheld!) by announcing the award.

Councillor Smith said, **"Barbara and Ian founded the LGMA and through it have made an outstanding contribution to the people of South Lanarkshire by enabling thousands of young people and adults to take part in musical activities. In terms of the mandolin they have promoted this instrument at a very high level not only in East Kilbride and South Lanarkshire but throughout Scotland and beyond."**

For the official awards ceremony and dinner on 8th February, Barbara and Ian attended the HQ of South Lanarkshire Council where Provost Mushtaq Ahmad presented them with an engraved crystal decanter and a framed certificate of achievement from South Lanarkshire Council. Barbara and Ian are pictured here being congratulated by Councillor Smith.

Celtic CONNECTIONS | 2007



Come & Try Mandolin: Just some of the happy faces from this year's workshops!

It's fourteen years since this festival first began, and during that time it has grown to become one of the largest winter music festivals in the world. The media reported that this year's Celtic Connections Festival attracted over 100,000 visitors. It appeared to us that they all wanted to learn to play the mandolin!

It's six years since the LGMA became a "partner" of Celtic Connections and following on from the success of our mandolin workshops at previous festivals we were asked to cater for even more people. We ran two Come and Try sessions, one "mandolin for beginners" and a workshop for more experienced players. All in all we catered for about one hundred people. Our stall was also very busy and we would like to say a very big thank you to all the tutors, LGMA members and helpers who gave us their time and support for this event.

Picture courtesy of Lorna Cammock.

The BMG Mandolin Teachers' Course

by Eddie Smith

In 2006, the first ever Mandolin Teachers' Course run by the BMG took place in Scotland. The course can lead to a recognised teaching qualification in the shape of the **Diploma, Associateship or Licentiate in Mandolin Education** in association with Victoria College of Music in London, and was co-ordinated by Barbara Pommerenke-Steel of the BMG.



The objectives of the course were to take participants through an educationally sound and **comprehensive approach to teaching methodologies** for the mandolin, so that upon qualification, those involved would be completely equipped to teach all levels of students, whether children or adults, following a methodology which is both musically sound and intellectually stimulating.

The principal course tutors were Keith Harris and Stefanie Rauch who designed a programme of activities which took place over five weekends, a total of seventeen days in all which covered all aspects of the mandolin including music history and musicology, musical form and teaching methodology; instrumental technique, individual and group teaching approaches; mandolin repertoire and marketing. (A detailed overview of the course contents can be seen on the BMG Federation website and the LGMA website.) In addition to Keith and Stefanie, visiting tutors were brought in to lecture on their own specialist areas; Frances Taylor on Italian mandolin, Nigel Gatherer on Celtic mandolin and David Griffiths on Jazz mandolin. There were many opportunities to observe and be observed in a teaching situation, which was **hugely beneficial** and rewarding to all. Well structured Homework was provided after all weekends, which allowed participants an opportunity to extend their learning beyond that which could be covered during the teaching time.

THE PARTICIPANTS!

With tutors Stefanie Rauch and Keith Harris, and course co-ordinator Barbara Pommerenke Steel on the final weekend of the course in Biggar.



Back row (left to right)
Alan Jones, Antonio Vieira, Ann Messenger, Les Donaghy, Graeme Thomson, Keith Harris

Front Row (left to right)
Eddie Smith, Henry Girvan, Barbara Pommerenke-Steel, Stefanie Rauch

The major impact upon course participants from the technical and methodological approach taken by Keith and Stefanie was that they realised just how much the potential teacher can learn from **attention to detail** and detailed observation of the process of learning to play the mandolin. Their detailed approach to analysis of just what can happen when a group of mandolin players attempt to play a simple downstroke was a revelation!

Moreover, in Keith's recently published manual **"The Mandolin Game"** a number of 'games' or strategies to help solve problems that students may have, took us deeper into the importance of helping the student to try to get it right.

As well as this, the course was conducted in an excellent spirit to try to maintain the sense of fun and involvement we all get from playing music, and in this regard it would be proper to mention Ian Steel, who not only made the course financially viable for participants through support from the LGMA, but also injected his own sense of fun on his visits to supply us with materials or to collect people from airports.

I completely agreed with Ian who said on our last weekend that this was not just another course, but **an important development in BMG history**.

“Six Episodes” by Alison Stephens

Published by Astute Music
Reviewed by Barbara Pommerenke-Steel

Six Episodes is a selection of six pieces for mandolin solo. Under each piece the player can find some notes on the required techniques and musical performance.

No. 1: Reflection

This beautiful piece conveys just what the title says. A melody is developed over an accompaniment of lower notes. Careful consideration should be given to the precise notation, which makes the composer's intention clear.

The piece is mostly straightforward. Open strings are mainly used in the accompaniment. Just in a few places stopped/fretted notes are used, sometimes resulting in the player having to play two fretted notes at the same time. The piece is very even in difficulty and therefore has been added to the mandolin exam syllabus at Grade 2.

No. 2: Breaktime

A lively piece in F-major with suggested fingering in 2nd position. People who cannot stretch that far can choose to play the piece using 1st position whilst using the 4th finger on the d. Some tremolo and position playing make it about a Grade 3/4 piece.

No. 3: A Day Out

A piece in two parts: In the first part a melody is developed over an accompaniment on open strings. Part 2 can be played using tremolo. In a few places the player has to carefully consider fingering to ensure legato whilst playing 5ths.

No. 4: Cloudy Horizons

The technical requirements include the ability to play easy chords, harmonics on the 12th fret, and to differentiate between the melody and the accompaniment through the use of dynamics. It is a very nice piece at about Grade 2 level.

No. 5: Polly's Variation

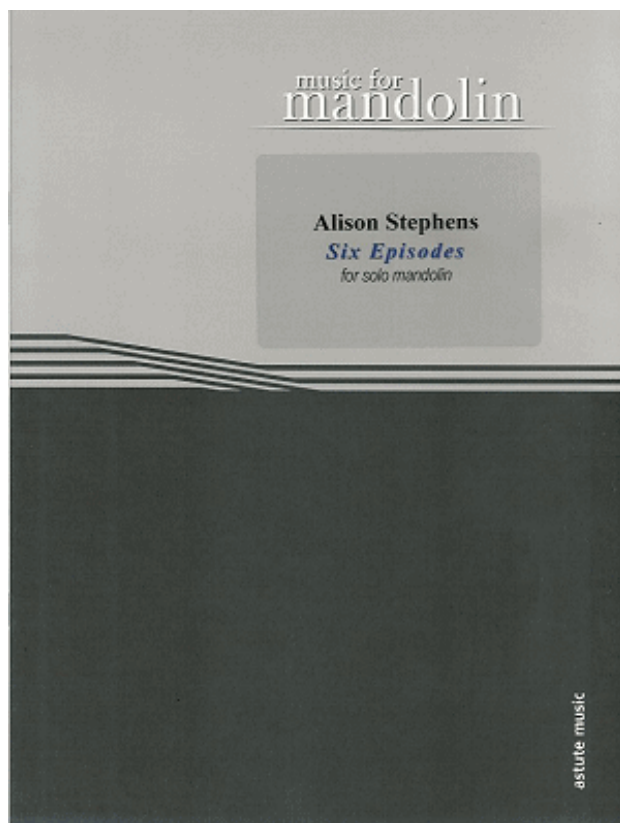
This piece follows the classical Theme & Variation format. In each variation either the rhythm or the key is changed.

No. 6: Rondo

This is another piece that focuses on a specific technical aspect – this time double stopping. Commonly known double stops are put into a nice musical context. Some fingerings are given and a few more are needed to ensure legato.

Overall

Six Episodes is a very good book with enjoyable pieces, very clear print and helpful comments. For the price of £6 it is a worthwhile buy.



The Victoria College of Music, London, runs the graded exams for mandolin referred to in this article. Visit www.vcmexams.com for more details.

WHATS ON?

Have a browse through this selection and see what takes your fancy!

If you know of concerts that you would like to see listed here, please contact **graemethomson@hotmail.co.uk** for a free listing.

Whether it is a concert you are organising, or a concert you think others would be interested in, let us know!



Event	Location	Date/Time	Price	Contact
Scottish Piano Day	RSAMD Concert Hall	Sun 29 th April 11.00am – 5.30pm		Box Office 0414 332 4101
A Tribute to Queen	Royal Concert Hall – Strathclyde Suite	Sat 5 th May 8.00	£15	Box Office 0141 353 8000
Buxtehude Organ Recital	RSAMD Concert Hall	Wed 9 th May 5.30pm	Free by ticket	Box Office 0414 332 4101
Thriller: A Celebration of Michael Jackson and The Jackson Five	Royal Concert Hall	Sat 20 th May 7.30pm	£20/ £32.50	Box Office 0141 353 8000
REO Speedwagon	Royal Concert Hall	Mon 4 th June 7.30pm	£35	Box Office 0141 353 8000
Guitar Masterclass with Tomasz Zawierucha	RSAMD Guinness Room	Tue 5 th June 2.00pm	Free by ticket	Box Office 0414 332 4101
Guitar Concert featuring Tomasz Zawierucha	RSAMD Guinness Room	Wed 6 th June 7.30pm	Free by ticket	Box Office 0414 332 4101
The Falklands 25 th Anniversary Show featuring Jane McDonald	Royal Concert Hall	Thurs 7 th June 7.30pm	£17/ £15	Box Office 0141 353 8000
RSMAD Scottish Music Department Concert	RSAMD Guinness Room	Mon 11 th June 7.30pm	Free by ticket	Box Office 0414 332 4101
Dougie McLean Band	Royal Concert Hall	Sat 16 th June	£18.50/ £16.50	Box Office 0141 353 8000
Da Capo Alba	Arts Centre, East Kilbride	Sat 16th June	tbc	Box Office 01355 261000
LGMA Classes and MANGO	Murray Owen Centre, East Kilbride	Sun 17th June	tbc	LGMA 01698 457518
Sound Explorations: Electroacoustic Event	RSAMD Concert Hall	Mon 18 th June 7.30pm	Free by ticket	Box Office 0414 332 4101
String Department Concert	RSAMD Concert Hall	Tues 19 th June 7.30pm	Free by ticket	Box Office 0414 332 4101

Non-LGMA concerts are out with the control of the LGMA, and we cannot be held accountable for any cancellations that are made to concerts. Listings are correct to the best of our knowledge, and we will not be held accountable for any mistakes made.

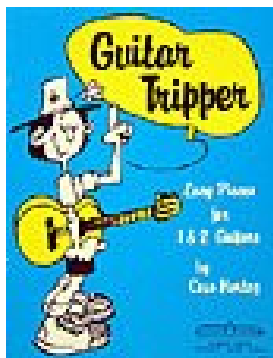


For details on the LGMA events, please log onto our website,
www.mandolinscotland.org
For the other events, check out the venues' websites.

Cees Hartog – Compositions for Guitar

Published by Alsbach
Reviewed by Barbara Pommerenke-Steel

Cees Hartog is a Dutch guitar player, teacher and composer who is mostly known through his guitar tutor and his series of books for guitar at beginner and intermediate level. In the following article, I focus on his books **"String Walker"**, **"Guitar Tripper"**, and **"Toca Guitarra"**.



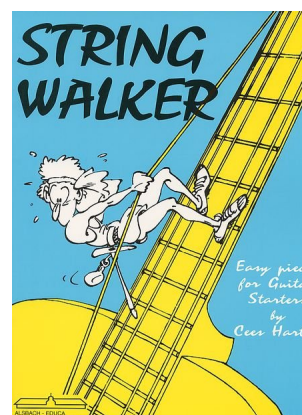
Guitar Tripper is a collection of pieces for one or two guitars in the range from Grade 1 to about Grade 3. Pieces from a variety of styles can be found in it:

- Traditionals from different countries e.g.
 - Parsons Farewell – England
 - Gopak – Russia
- A number of Scottish traditional tunes
- Classical Music e.g.
 - Largo by Dvorak
- Blues compositions, and
- a number of compositions in a more contemporary style by Cees Hartog himself.

The part for the second guitar is mostly chordal but not uninteresting to play. The highlight of the book is a **very beautiful** arrangement of the tune "El noy de la mare". The melody is set in 5th position throughout. The 2nd part plays a very nice accompaniment.

String Walker is a collection of pieces for solo guitar; it starts with "The Juggler" - a favourite of all new guitar players. The pieces are more or less ordered in progression of difficulty. Another popular piece like "Paolina" needs position playing and a variety of chords.

Overall it is a collection of pieces which will not only give learners a lot of interesting pieces to choose from, but also give established players some nice pieces to play.

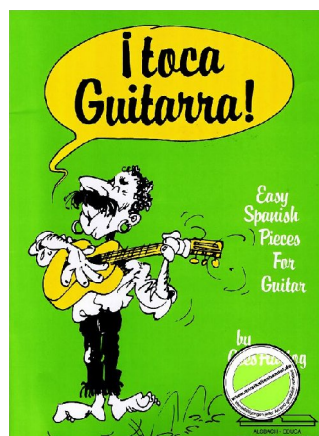


Toca Guitarra simply means "play guitar". It

is a collection of pieces in a South American and Spanish style. Techniques required include melody playing accompanied by fretted bass notes, arpeggios and position playing, simple chords and in the last piece hammer-ons and pull-offs.

Included in this book are some guitar favourites like "El Papamoscas". In the first part a lively melody is played accompanied by mostly open string bass notes, while in the second part the player is asked to strum chord. An effective "party piece" which I have arranged for ensemble many times and which was always well received.

Amongst other pieces you can find an arrangement of Malaguena, a Danza Espanola and a piece called Carratera Resbaladiza in which effective use of hammer-ons and pull-offs is made. This piece requires a good player to get the full effect of it. Overall this book contains many good pieces of moderate difficulty.



Each of these books is published by Alsbach and cost around £7.

In the next issue I will have a closer look at some of Cees Hartog's books of literature for intermediate players.

WHICH MANDOLIN? – Intermediate/Advanced

by Ian Pommerenke-Steel



Continuing from “Which Mandolin? – Beginners”, we now take a brief look at “moving up a level” to mandolins for intermediate/advanced players. Of course we can’t look at them all, so I’ve chosen three of the most popular in the UK, all of which, in my opinion, are good quality hand built flatback mandolins at a reasonable price, used by amateurs and top professionals alike. **Remember the considerations outlines in the first article: Your budget? What type of music do you want to play? What type of sound are you looking for?**

The most important piece of advice when you’re spending serious money is to **try before you buy. Remember that what suits one person might not suit you.**



Moon mandolins (known as “Moon Guitars”) are very well established as quality instruments and owner Jimmy Moon has now developed the whole range of mandolin family instruments. Jimmy started the business in 1979 on the Island of Arran before moving to Glasgow. So we could really say that Jimmy is our “local” builder. The basic mandolin from the “standard series” is simple but lovely, with Flamed

Maple back and sides, a spruce soundboard, mahogany neck, and of course the “Moon” inlaid into the ebony head plate. A quality instrument with an excellent sound and when I last checked, the price was around the £550 mark which is very good value. Jimmy might even give you a “wee discount” if you mention the LGMA. Jimmy does not stop here with his mandolins. He has some really advanced top kit... get your wallet out... and check out Jimmy’s web site: www.moonguitars.co.uk and as one of our members said, **“I’m over the moon with my Moon.”**



Thomas Buchanan... Honestly I’m not being biased choosing Scottish builders. Anyway Thomas has moved to the South of Scotland to em, oh yeah, England. But even in England he’s still making superb instruments! You will notice from the photos that Thomas uses a fixed bridge system with guitar type pegs to



secure the strings which is quite unusual, although not unique, in hand built mandolins. Thomas uses solid spruce tops and Sycamore, Maple or Mahogany backs and sides, Rosewood binding and a Rosewood or Ebony fingerboard mounted on a Mahogany neck. It’s very light but can deliver a big sound. Like Moon, Thomas also offers a good range of other instruments. The Buchanan mandolin is around £550... but **Thomas has offered an exclusive, whopping 20% discount to LGMA members.**

Fylde Mandolin (Fylde Guitars) Roger Bucknell made his first guitar from plywood... maybe not very practical, but he was only nine years old at the time! He obviously caught the bug and now with over 30 years’ experience in the “instrument game,” Roger has made Fylde one of the best known and respected names in the world of mandolins and guitars. His basic mandolin (although there is nothing basic about it... it’s lovely) is the “Touchstone” with a saplele body, spruce top, Honduras mahogany neck and ebony fingerboard and bridge... it’s built like a tank... and the sound and sustain are excellent. The longer scale length (375mm) also gives people a bit more space on the fretboard. Roger spent many years as an engineer and was heavily involved in the study of sound waves, and if the quality of his instruments is anything to go by, then his studies were well worth the time. At around £600 the very versatile Touchstone is a little more expensive than the Moon or Buchanan and the signature model is £895, but you can shop around and there is quite a difference in price depending on where you buy from. Interesting web site: www.fyldeguitars.com



Some general advice when buying an instrument

When buying a mandolin of this quality I usually suggest the following: look around and test as many instruments as possible, make a list of features that you find important and write down any comments you have about the instruments you played.

This could include:

the size of the mandolin, the shape of the neck, the sound and sustain when playing different notes (e.g. on the 4th string, the higher notes), the sound and sustain when playing chords, the spacing of the strings in relation to each other, the scale length, the weight of the instrument.



When testing instruments I suggest selecting short sections of different pieces. For example: a few bars for testing the sound on the 4th string, for testing the high notes, etc. When you are in a shop and you have narrowed down your selection, I suggest that you only play a few bars on each instrument (the "sound on the 4th strings bars) and then to try the same thing on the next instrument. I think if you play too many different things on one instrument before going to the next you have already forgotten how the first thing sounded and are less able to really compare the mandolins. **These principles can apply just as well to guitars.**

So that's all folks, but my final piece of advice... If you're spending money on works of art, like a Moon, Buchanan or Fylde, for goodness sake go that bit further and:

A. Make sure you get the instrument insured and

B. Get a good quality hard case to protect your investment!

It never ceases to amaze me, the number of people carrying quality instruments around in things like poly bags! So do you see the lovely pictures above? Jimmy Moon wins the star prize for offering this reinforced fibreglass hard shell mandolin case. These rugged cases are perfectly fitted (but check that it will fit your particular instrument) come complete with a hygrometer and carry straps... and the price is an incredible £96.00... incredible because a comparative case could cost around £300. (Gosh! I wonder if Jimmy's made a mistake?)

So that's it folks... three excellent builders and three excellent mandolins!



Mango is the LGMA's youth orchestra.
We have around 25 members, playing guitar
mandolin and bass.

We play a wide variety of styles from South
American to pop and from blues to classical.

Where: East Kilbride Arts Centre

When: Every Wednesday

Time: 5.00 – 6.30pm

We are looking for members! You should be
able to play to Grade 1 standard, and must be
able to read music.



Da Capo Alba is the LGMA's senior orchestra.
We have around 20 members who play
mandolin, mandola, guitar and bass.

Where: East Kilbride Arts Centre

When: Every Wednesday

Time: 7.10 – 9.30pm

We are looking for members!
If you would like to join, feel free to come along
to one of our rehearsals to listen.

We are continually changing our repertoire and
usually perform around 5 times a year.

The Mandolin in the early to mid 19th Century

A short series on mandolin history - by Ian Pommerenke-Steel



Mandolino

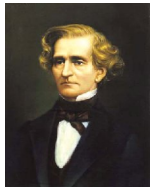
The Decline of the Mandolino and Mandoline

In the previous newsletter we looked at the **Mandolino** (with 5 or 6 pairs of strings) and the immense rise in interest caused by the almost revolutionary development of Vinaccia's "new" Mandoline (4 courses of strings tuned in fifths). That interest however, did not continue and in the decades that followed the Napoleonic Wars of 1815, the Mandolino and Mandoline disappeared almost entirely from the concert-halls of Europe.

We do know however that a few prominent players did continue to perform, and in Vienna **Bartolomeo Bortolazzi**, to whom the Hummel mandolin concerto was dedicated, and **Pietro Vimercati** were among the last travelling mandolin players of this time. In general the mandoline became the instrument of the street musicians, and although almost none of the vast quantity of music written in the 18th century used tremolo, history records that nearly all street musicians who used the mandoline played using constant tremolo. And so it appeared that the large repertoire of notated instrumental music for the mandolino and the mandoline was completely forgotten, **as was the single stroke style of playing.**



Johann Nepumuk
Hummel



Hector Berlioz –
Composer
"Are there no
mandolinists left
in all of Paris?"

Even in Paris where the mandoline had once been held in very high esteem, the situation was so bad that the accomplished guitarist and composer Berlotz commented,

"In the theatres where Mozart's Don Giovanni is staged it is impossible to find an accomplished mandolinist and although fine musicians attempt to play the mandoline part on pizzicato violins or on guitars, the timbre of these instruments do not have the piercing delicacy of the instrument for which they substitute and Mozart knew well what he was doing when he chose the mandoline to accompany the erotic song of his hero"

(Berlioz 1843)

So what was the reason for the decline of an instrument that had once been so popular?

It would seem that the mandoline was not the only plucked string instrument in decline. The lute, harp, harpsichord and to a lesser extent, the guitar, were also becoming neglected.

One of the main reasons was undoubtedly the "evolution" of music during the early to mid 19th century. Put in simple terms **it got louder**, orchestras got larger, doubling and sometimes tripling in size and nearly all of the individual instruments were redesigned to produce a greater volume of sound and to extend their upper range. History records that around this time, string instruments that were bowed or struck (i.e. violin family and piano) were dominating the large concert halls of Europe. Significant developments had taken place in the design of the piano giving it formidable range and power while the sustaining qualities of violins and other bowed string instruments ideally suited the extended melodic lines favoured by romantic composers who wrote strident and powerful music to be played in the large concert halls. It was in these altered circumstances that the mandolino and mandoline fell completely out of grace with the Art-Music world.

Around the 1820/30's advances in industrial processes enabled the production of high-tension steel that could be used to make long lasting and powerful strings.



Vinaccia Mandoline
1744

In Italy some interest still remained and the style of mandolines in use was similar to those designed by the Vinaccia family around 1740 (a design which was copied by many other builders). Although the export market for this type of mandolines had disappeared by around 1815, Gaetano Vinnacia continued to produce mandolines in this style for local consumption until his death in 1831.

(Photo left) The Vinaccia mandoline of around 1744 was a very delicate instrument constructed as follows: ten frets on a fingerboard lying flush with the table to which some additional frets were glued, 3 pairs of brass strings and one pair of gut, tuned with wooden pegs and plucked with a quill.

The Turning Point - Italy and the Modern Mandolin

Following the death of Gaetano, the family business was taken over by Pasquale Vinaccia. Pasquale had been influenced by the alteration and developments which had taken place with the piano, violin and guitar, and around 1835 he designed what became known as "The Modern Neapolitan Mandolin".

He raised and extended the fingerboard (fretboard), increasing the number of frets to seventeen and the mandolin's upper limit to a''' . He also deepened the bowl to achieve greater resonance, strengthened the body and increased the size and weight of the whole instrument and was then able to fit strings made from the "new" high-tension steel. The upper two courses were plain and the lower two wound with copper. The "new" metal machine heads were adopted and these were essential when tuning such sensitive strings. The quill which had previously been used to pluck the strings was not strong enough for the thin steel high-tension strings. Tortoise shell had long been abundant in southern Italy and an important export commodity, and so the quill was therefore replaced by a plectrum made from tortoise shell.



Pasquale Vinaccia
Modern Neapolitan Mandolin
Circa 1860

This was Pasquale Vinaccia's revolutionary design and, although over the years many individual makers have since modified the design, it has remained the standard form of the mandolin in Europe for the past century and a half. The course of Italian history changed with unification in 1859/60 and the mandolin's history was also about to change. Over the next decades there would be an **explosion of interest** in the mandolin, its players and its music.

To be continued in your Summer issue!

Acknowledgements: 1. Paul Sparks "The Classical Mandolin" (Oxford University Press)
2. George Gruhn (Gruhn Guitars) – Vinaccia "Modern Neapolitan Mandolin" photo

LGMA RAFFLE ... Sorry!



In the last newsletter we announced that our raffle draw would take place in December, but we were very kindly advised that (by law) we required a licence to run a "public raffle".

So we apologise to all those who expected the draw to take place in December. **Don't worry, your tickets are still valid!** Now that we are "legal," the draw will take place at our annual concert in the East Kilbride Arts Centre on Saturday 16th June, **so the good news is that you still have a chance to win!** Even better news is that you can still buy tickets, which cost £1 each.

To have tickets sent to you, please post a cheque for the number of tickets you would like, made out to **"LGMA"** to:

LGMA Prize Draw
5 Main Road
Fenwick
Ayrshire KA3 6QA

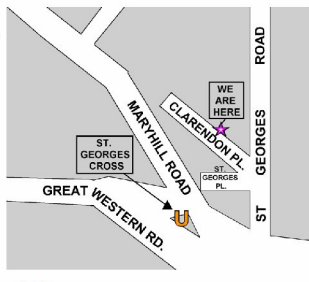
Cheques should reach us by **9th June 2007** please. You should enclose a **stamped addressed envelope** with your cheque for the return of your tickets.

And just a reminder of what's on offer... Courtesy of Folk Revolution the first prize is a superb Eastman MD 504 Mandolin complete with a fitted hard case. Eastman makes very good instruments and the 504 has a solid carved spruce top, carved maple back, solid flamed maple side and an ebony fret board and bridge... all in all a £400 package. Second prize is a classical guitar and third prize an Ozark beginner's mandolin. Raffle tickets are £1.

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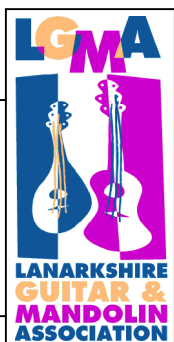
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- Mango and Da Capo Alba information

and much more...



**For further details of LGMA, BMG or EGMA events and activities
please contact our development officer (Ian)**
Lanarkshire Guitar and Mandolin Association, 1 Fraser Crescent, Hamilton
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