



# SOUNDBOARD

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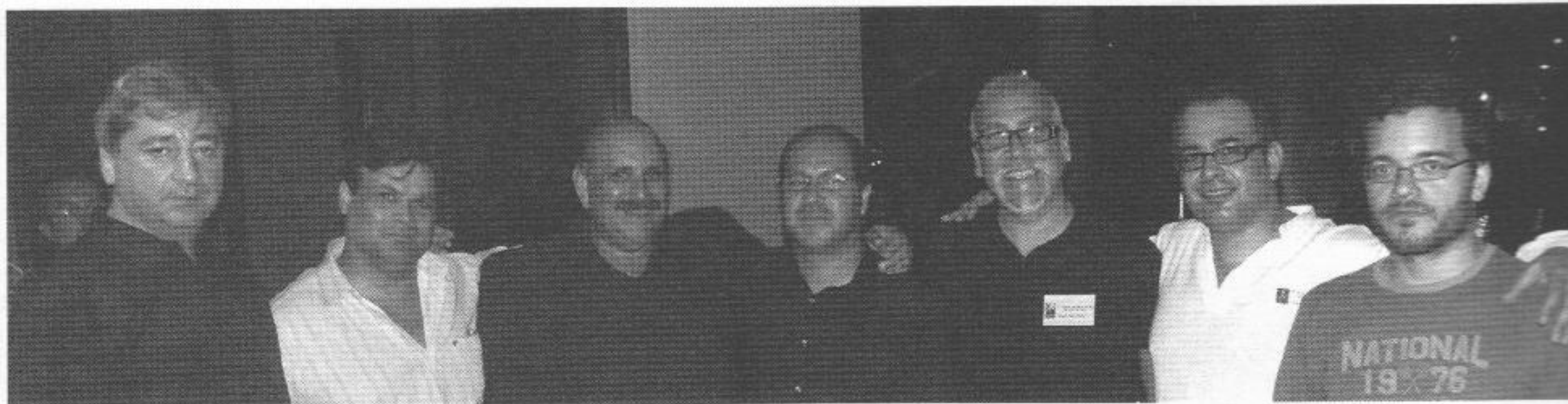
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\$12.00





From left to right: Vlaslav Bláha, Mir Ali, René González, Raul Olmos, Roberto Fabbri, Rafael Padrón, Boris Gaquère

was an amazing solo version of Falla's *Danza española No. 1* from *La vida breve*.

The Centro cultural español, which hosted the events, including the concerts, was within walking distance of a pleasant and reasonably priced hotel, and less than a block from S.W. 8th Street, Miami's legendary *Calle Ocho*, and great restaurants such as the popular Versailles. Molina had planned everything so there was ample time to eat, and he even provided a tour of Miami Beach and other local sites. The artistic level of the concerts and of the competition were impossible to beat.

Several days later, I returned to Coral Gables to attend the **Miami International Guitar Festival** at the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami, under the artistic direction of René González and Rafael Padrón. The scheduled concerts included still another all-star international line-up: René and Rafa and friends on June 19, Raúl Olmos and Vladislav Bláha on June 20, Mir Ali and Boris Gaquère on June 21, Roberto Fabbri and Berta Rojas on June 22, and Leonardo Lozano and Michael Chapdelaine on June 23. There were also master-classes, showcase concerts, and a lecture on "French History and the Classical Guitar" (by myself).

The facilities at the University of Miami were first-class; the lobby of the Clarke Recital Hall looks out over a small lake with a large fountain illuminated dramatically at night, and containing several crocodiles (yes, I said crocodiles—not al-

ligators). Participants could stay in the university dormitories, which were reasonably priced, or at several nearby hotels along South Dixie Highway. There were plenty of places to eat, including a good student cafeteria, and the campus Starbucks got a lot of business, too.

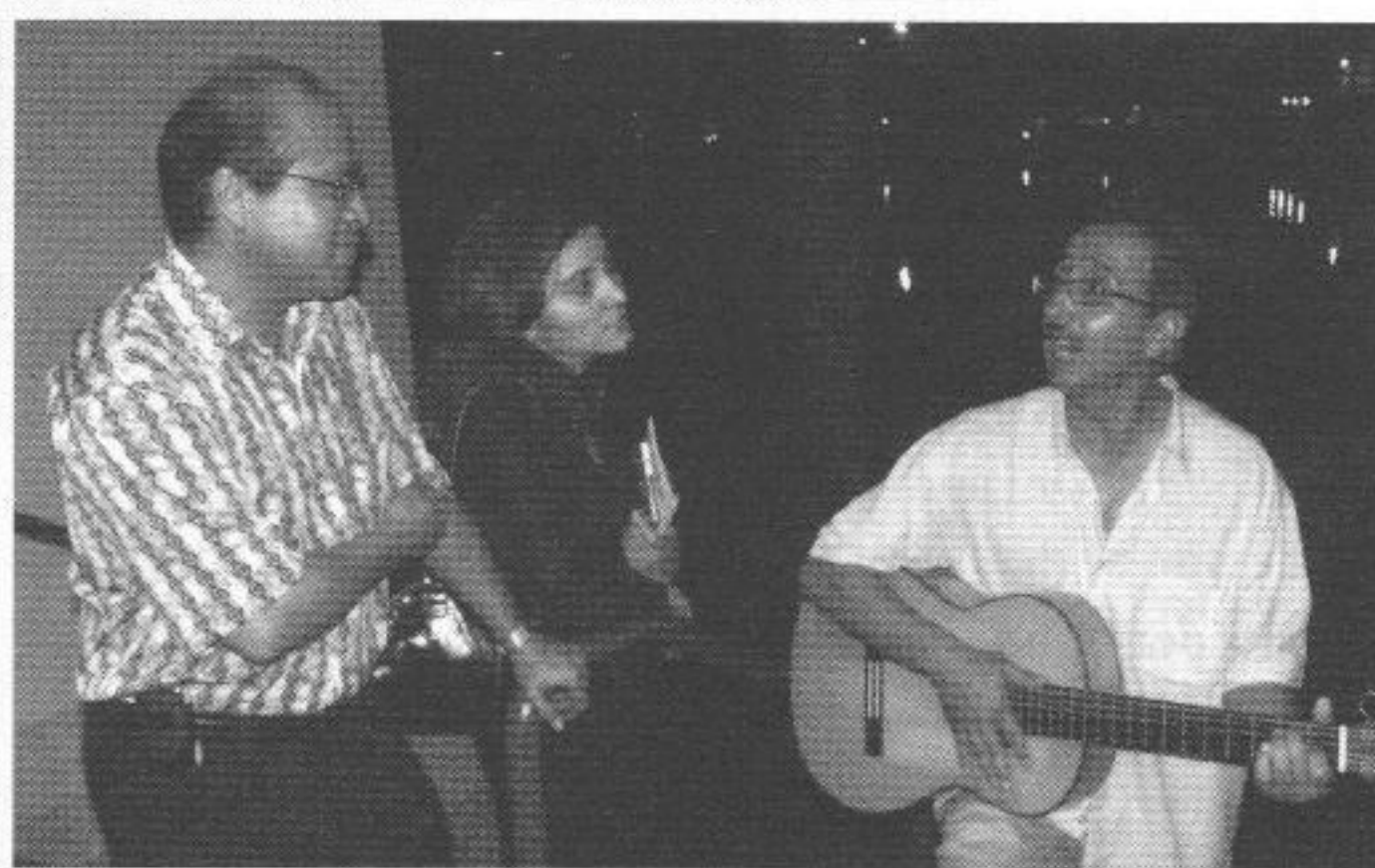
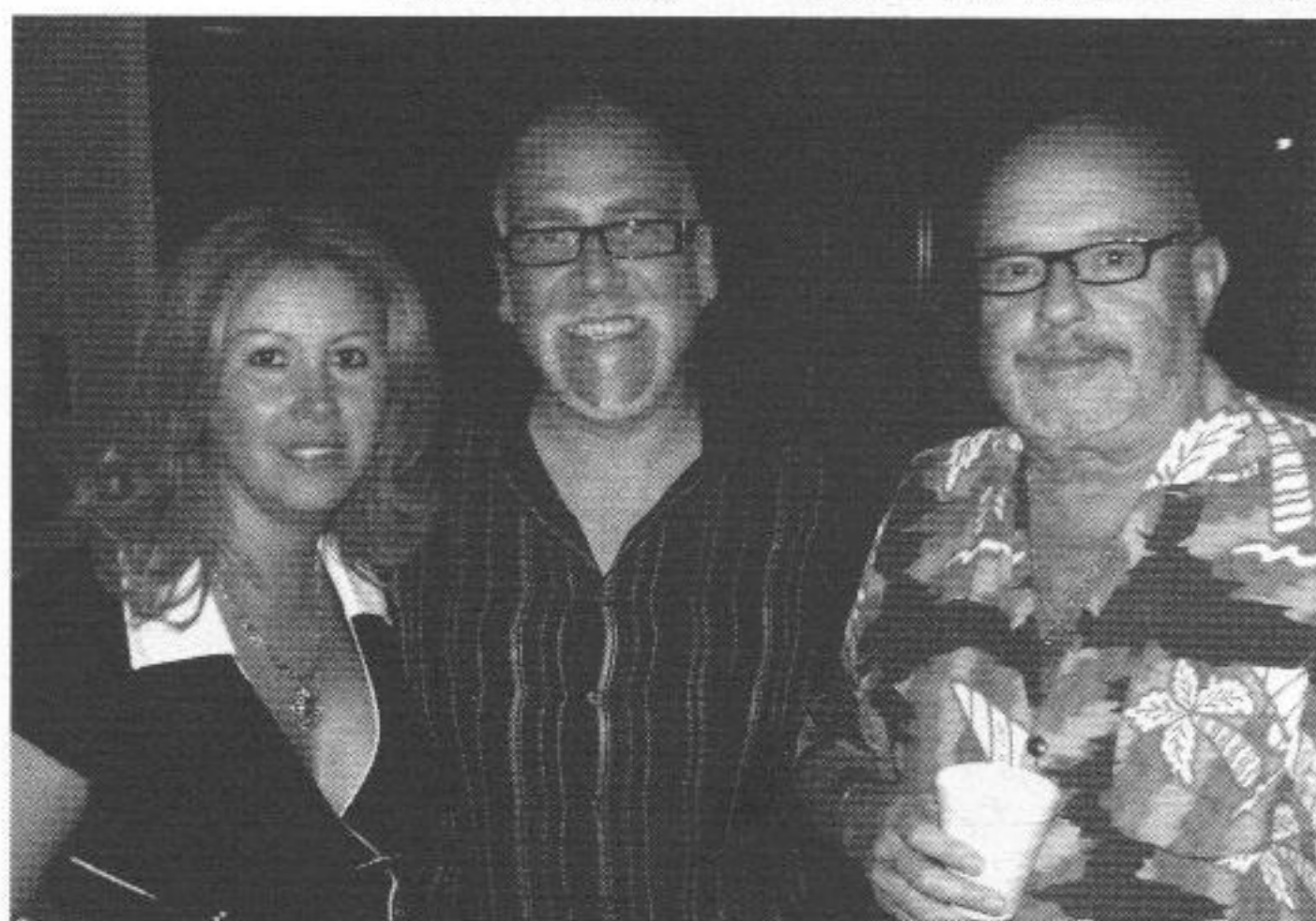
The opening concert featured René González in duo with flutist Robert David Billington. The program was fresh and original: Rodrigo's *Aria antigua*, a Carulli *Serenade*, *Gardens of the Villa Taranto* by Australian composer Colin Brumby, *Haru no Umi* by Michio Miyagi, and the Norwegian composer Karsten Brustad's *If Night's Dawn Imposed All (I.N.D.L.A.)*. Their encore was a *Chôro* by Celso Machado. I appreciated the freshness of this programming; the guitar's chamber repertoire has been expanding faster than guitarists have kept up, and the Billington/González duo are doing their part to remedy the situation by finding new, audience-friendly pieces that deserve to be better known. The second half of the concert featured Rafael Padrón playing solos (*Barrios' Chôro de Saudade* and a rousing *Carnival of Venice* by Tárrega) and an ensemble: Claude Bolling's *Concerto for Classical Guitar and Jazz Piano* (haven't heard that one in a few years!) ably joined by his wife, pianist Aisa Campo, with Pablo García on bass and Fernando Campo on drums.

The June 20 concert paired Mexican guitarist Raúl Olmos with Czech virtuoso Vladislav Bláha. Olmos, an elegant, restrained, musical player, performed Mertz' *Gondolier*, a



From left to right:  
René González,  
Roberto Fabbri,  
Berta Rojas,  
Manuel García,  
Boris Gaquère,  
Rafael Padrón, and  
Federico Musgrove





Lauro Vals *venezolano*, the popular Cardoso *Milonga*, and Dyens' flashy *Tango en skaï*, interspersed with works by Mexican composer Gerardo Tamez. The highlights of Bláha's performance were the *Usher Waltz* of Nikita Koshkin, three movements from John Duarte's *Moraviana*, and Stepan Rak's lovely *Elegy* and flashy *Hora*, which begins with an extended left-hand cadenza. He also played three original arrangements of Falla pieces; his encore was Koshkin's raggy *Parade*.

The Pakistani-born Mir Ali is an innovative and eclectic guitarist who is adept at classical, acoustic, jazz, and even Flamenco styles, and who weaves these and other influences into his original compositions and arrangements. His opening piece, for amplified guitar and tape, was the hypnotic *Rag Kirvani*, a northern Indian *raga* in a version which, the program notes say, was recorded by Doc and Merle Watson (!) He also played a number of his own works, clearly Flamenco-inspired, and pieces by Manolo Sanlucar and his own teacher Richard Pick. There was a beautiful medley of Barrios interwoven with José Luis Merlin's haunting *Evocación*, and his encore was Lennon and McCartney's *Yesterday*.

In the second half of the concert, Belgian guitarist Boris Gaquère played more traditional repertoire: Weiss' *Suite*

No. 25 "*L'Infidèle*," Dušan Bogdanović's *Jazz Sonata*, and (he studied with the Assads) a flashy medley of Brazilian or Brazilian-inspired pieces by himself, Baden Powell, and Paulo Bellinati. His encore was the Dyens arrangement of Jobim's *Felicidade*.

On Friday, June 22, the Italian guitarist and composer Roberto Fabbri played the opening concert. Fabbri is occasionally a bit rough and sometimes has a nailly sound, but he is flamboyant and technically astonishing—a definite crowd pleaser. His own compositions range from unabashedly pretty to exuberant barn-burners, often with a pop sensibility, with titles that evoke places like *South Beach* and *Atocha*. One of them, *Nocte in Belgrado*, reminded me a little of Andrew York, a sort of *Gypsy Jubilation*. Interspersed with his own works were Giuliani's *Rossiniana* No. 6, Op. 124, Brouwer's *Un día de noviembre*, and Dyens' *Fuoco*. His encore was *Tango en skaï*.

The Paraguayan guitarist Berta Rojas' approach to guitar-playing is completely different from Fabbri's. She is controlled, elegant, and profoundly expressive. She opened with a gorgeous tremolo piece, Barrios' *Último canto*, followed by her own arrangement of Ledesma's playful *Balada del Indio*. Byeoung Woo Lee's *Mother* was so emotionally intense it