

17TH INTERNATIONAL GUITAR FESTIVAL

BRNO, CZECH REPUBLIC, AUGUST 3–8, 2008

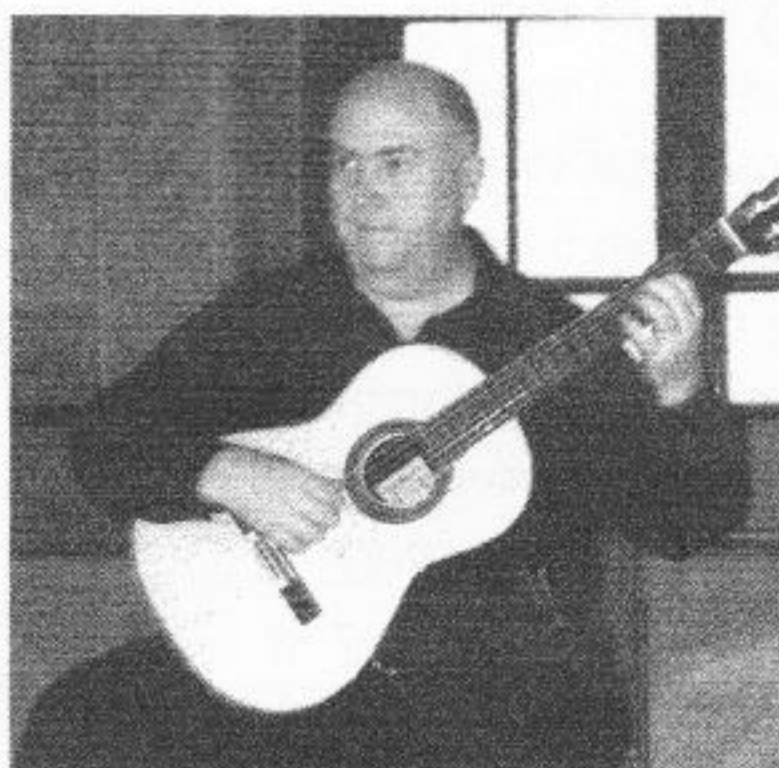
In this all-too-short week, guitarists from around the world gathered in Brno to express and demonstrate their love for music and for the guitar through performances, lectures, master classes or in informal conversation over a meal or drink. The theme of this year's festival was eloquently expressed by the festival's artistic director Vladislav Bláha:

The magical power of music with all its diversity can and does bring about a unity and spirit that transcends all the things one can think of that divide people.

The annual competition called Guitar Talent is comprised of two categories: Category I for younger performers born after August, 1994, and Category II for performers born after 1990. Performers in the first round were required to play works by Czech composers plus a free choice for a total of six minutes (Category I) or seven minutes for the older group. Those who made it to the second round in both categories had to perform a work from the Classical era plus a free choice. The Category I winners were Rosa Francizka Maier of Austria (First Prize); Vojtěch Kaluža of the Czech Republic (Second Prize); and David Liu of Austria. Category II winners were Vit Dvořáček, Czech Republic (First Prize); Wojciech Rysiecki, Poland (Second Prize); and Edoardo Lamacchia, Italy (Third Prize).

All of the winners were awarded prizes that included Savarez and D'Addario strings, a Schneider guitar (awarded to the first prize winner in Category II), Efel guitar supports, and Sofit glass nail files. The members of the jury were Maria

Linnemann (Germany), Julian Byzantine (Australia), Roberto Fabbri (Italy), Jim Skinger (U.S.A.), Lucio Dosso (Italy), Luciano Tortorelli (Italy), Finn Svit (Denmark), Jochen Brusch (Germany), Milan Tesař (Czech Republic), Vladislav Petrášek (Czech Republic), and Igor Shoshyn (Belarus).



Above: Scott Tennant; center: Julian Byzantine;
below: Dale Kavanagh at Brno

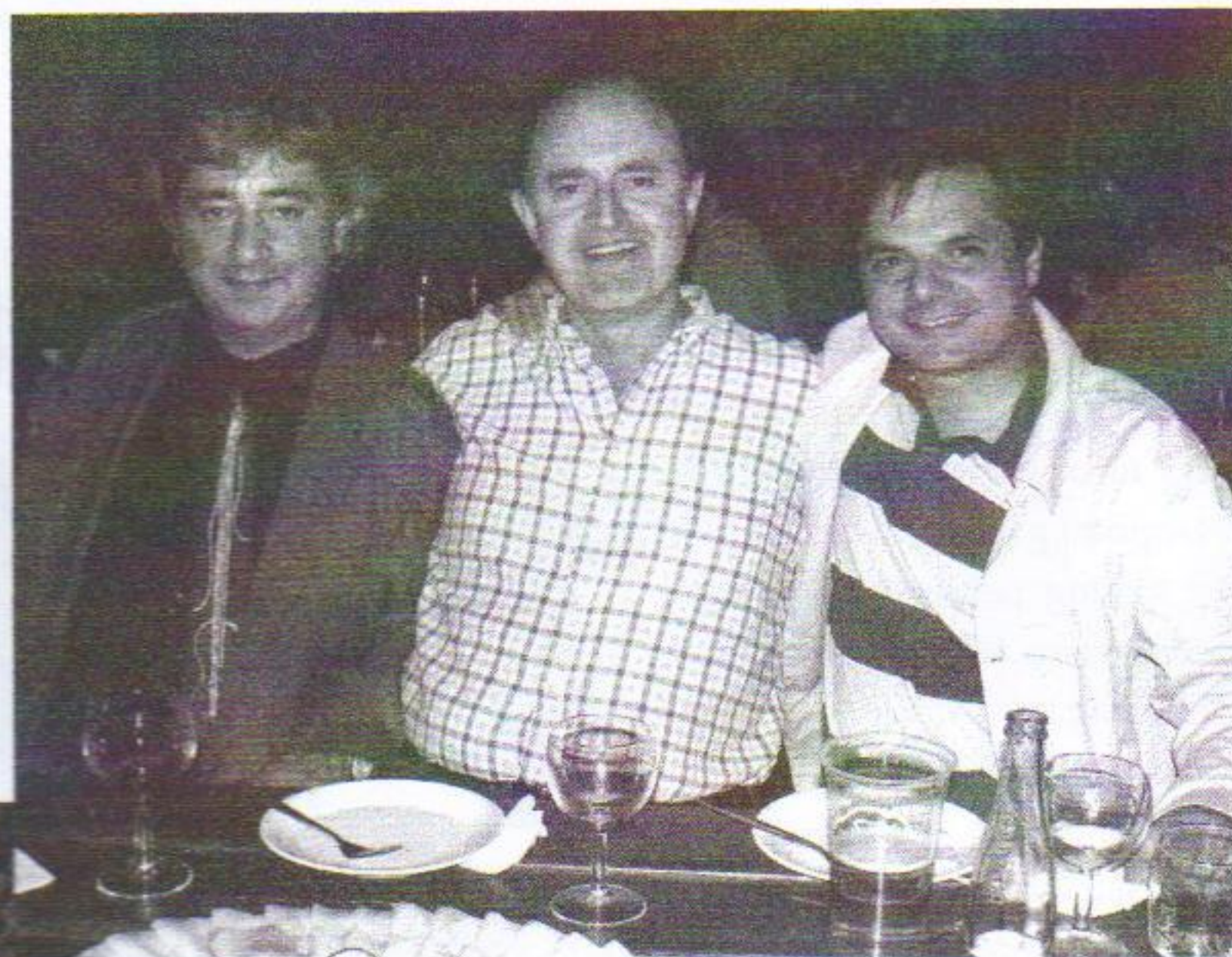
THE PERFORMANCES

A concert by internationally renowned performers took place each evening in the New City Hall, a beautifully restored Baroque building set high in the Brno hills. The opening concert was given on Sunday, August 3, by Julian Byzantine, a native Londoner who now makes his home in Australia. Byzantine's performance was solid and confidently played throughout. I first met Julian in 1975, when he gave a performance at the Romford Library in Essex, England. It was a great pleasure to witness the enormous growth as an artist he has achieved since those early days.

His program consisted of three movements from José Luis Merlin's *Suite del recuerdo*; Peter Sculthorpe's *From Kakado*; the *Sonatina meridional* of Manuel Ponce; three *Epitafios* by Mikis Theodorakis; and two movements from Philip Houghton's *Stélé*.

He also played Máximo Diego Pujol's *Elegía por la muerte de un tanguero*; five Balkan pieces by Béla Bartók; *Dudasok* by Dušan Bogdanović; Nikita Koshkin's *Ukrainian Waltz*; and Albéniz' *Cádiz* and *Puerta de tierra*.

The concerts were as diverse as the artists themselves. This was particularly evident in the Monday



Top left: Maria Linnemann, first prize winner Vit Duřáček, & Vladislav Bláha; Top right: Bláha, Julian Byzantine and Sandro Di Stefano; Below, left: Vladislav Bláha and Katerina Greňová.



August 4, recital by composer/guitarist, Sandro Di Stefano, whose remarkable midi guitar created fresh and unusual textures and sonorities. Many of his efforts are still in an experimental stage of development, as heard in the mixing of styles: classical, jazz, contemporary, world, and ethnic music, all fused into a new stylistic synthesis, allowing the guitar the opportunity to move into a new musical ethos. He performed works by himself, Mario Gangi, Lennon and McCartney, Stanley Myers, and Pat Metheny.

The evening concerts on Tuesday, August 5, were shared by the violin and guitar duo of Jochen Brusch and Finn Svit, followed by an engaging solo performance by Roberto Fabbri. Most notable in the duo's performance was the superb musicianship and originality of their program, which included movements from Francesco Veracini's *Sonata*, Op. 2; a *Sonata in A Major* by Antonio Vivaldi; Mauro Giuliani's *Variations on a Theme of Handel*, Op. 107, for guitar; Paganini's

Cantabile; one of his *Caprices* for violin solo; and the popular *Ronde des lutins* of Antonio Bazzini.

The second half of the evening featured Roberto Fabbri in a solo performance. No stranger to the European festival circuit, Roberto seems to be everywhere in Europe these days; his program was a mixture of his own short compositions—*La Passeggiata*, *Atocha*, *Preludio*, *Canzone*, *Ballade*, *Notte a Belgrado*, *Hammam*, *Dance for Dale*—interspersed with those of both familiar and less familiar composers, resulting in a nicely balanced program. We heard Giuliani's *Rossiniana* No. 6, Op. 124; Dyens' "Fuoco;" Giovanni Allevi's *Il Bacio*; and Brouwer's *Cantilena de los bosques* (which was dedicated to Fabbri). Judging from the enthusiastic audience's response, this was a wonderful finale to a great evening.

The Wednesday evening, August 6, recital was a much anticipated concert by the Grammy-award artist Scott Tennant. I have seen Scott's performances with the L. A. Guitar Quartet; however, this was the first I have heard Scott perform as a soloist. Not surprisingly, it was a solid and well played program from beginning to end. He played three works of John Dowland (*Queen Elizabeth's Galliard*, the *Frog Galliard*, *A Fancy*); three by Brouwer (*Homenaje a Falla*, *Pieza sin título*, *Danza característica*); Johan Jakob Froberger's *Lamento*; Antonio Ruiz-Pipó's *Canción y Danza* No. 1; selections from Joaquín Rodrigo's *Por los campos de España*; Telemann's *Fantasia* No. 1; Federico Moreno Torroba's *Burgalesa* and *Suite castellana*; and three Balkan pieces by Miroslav Tadić (*Makedonsko Devoje*, *Rustmul*, *Walk Dance*); and Eduardo Sáinz de la Maza's *Campanas del alba*.



Finn Svit (guitarist) & Jochen Brusch (violinist) in concert at Brno

On Thursday, August 7, Canadian guitarist Dale Kavanagh's performance was not only innovative and varied, but she brought a flair and elegance to her program that had everyone wanting more at the end. Dale began her program with one of her own pieces, *Briny Ocean*, the first of what turned out to be nine original works that were interspersed with more familiar fare, including a remarkable performance of her own transcription of the second movement of Villa Lobos' *Guitar Concerto*. Her program was *Briny Ocean*; Lennox Berkeley's *Sonatina*, Op. 51; the Villa Lobos; *Two Etudes* (Kavanagh); *Trilogy*, *A Step to Paradise*, and *Toccata in Blue* by Carlo Domeniconi; and her own *Prelude*, *Abbywood Trail*, *Melissa*, *Going Nowhere*, *Prelude*, *Contemplation*, and *Fueco*.

Members of the festival orchestra, comprised of students and teachers and ably conducted by Alois Menšík, assisted by Lubomír Ligas, performed an afternoon concert on Friday, August 8. Vivaldi's *Concerto in A*, with soloists Gianluigi Mutti, Luciano Tortorelli, Lucio Dosso, and Jim Skinger, was the highlight of the event. Seven student members of the orchestra gave additional solo and duo performances; they were K. Matkovská, O. Palíček, J. Kuklin, I. Sučková, M. Škubal, and the Duo Cazopoli.

On Friday evening, the final concert of the festival continued its long-established tradition of having a Flamenco evening in Spilberk Castle set high in the Brno hills. This year's spectacular offering was by Victor Monge, also known

as "Serranito." Victor was ably assisted by Angel López Muñoz, (dancer), Eva Durán (singer), Julia Vaquero Moran (singer), with Francisco Vidal and Victor Luis Monge Fernández. The program's theme was the "Fascination of Flamenco"—Dance & Guitar. Unlike last year's *nuevo flamenco*, Serranito's troupe performed traditional selections of the *Seguiriyas*, *Tangos*, *Alegrías*, and *Bulerías*, all brilliantly played, bringing a close to a phenomenal week of music making.

In addition to the evening concerts there was a series of lectures, afternoon concerts and master classes. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend all the lectures, but, I did get to attend a lecture/performance by Maria Linnemann. Maria is a specialist in teaching beginning and intermediate students, and has written a series of her own beautifully crafted solos,

duos, and ensemble pieces that effectively demonstrate her particular concepts. Maria has a wide-ranging background and an insightful understanding of how children learn, made evident throughout her lecture and performance demonstration. Additional lectures were given by Sandra Milutinović of Serbia and Gianluigi Mutti of Italy. I had the great pleasure of giving a lecture entitled "Roots of My Art" followed by a performance of my own compositions demonstrating how I was able to use melodic and harmonic material more often associated within the jazz idiom.

Thanks to all of the supporters whose generosity made the festival and the competition so successful. Particular thanks are due to Director Vladislav Bláha; Festival Secretary Katarina Greňová; assistants Tana Žižková and Elena Petrukova; the Municipality of Brno, the Jihomoravský region, the BKC Centre of Cultural Life in Brno; Jitka Kyasová of the Brno Cultural Center Programming Section; Secretary Mioš Brzák and the Czech Guitar Society, and all patrons and sponsors of festival. Everybody interested in the next XVIII International Guitar Festival is welcome to contact www.guitar.cz.

—Jim Skinger

