



All In for the Play-In

Members jam and perform in low-stakes, high-payoff fest

Sounds of guitar music from flamenco to Bach floated through the bright and cozy Chapel Hill home of MaryJane and Ed Nirdlinger in the first member party and play-in of the 2018-19 season on Jan. 12.

Outside, a few flakes of sleet fell, and greater accumulations recorded or expected elsewhere in the Triangle kept some would-be attenders away (precipitation has been a factor in three of the last four TGS meetings and events, by the way!).

The approximately 20 members who did make it were dealt a fun and relaxing evening of sharing great music and another excellent potluck dinner.

The bad weather didn't deter Travis McLaurin from driving from his home in Fayetteville to join TGS and participate in his first event.

"My teacher told me that I needed to be involved in the Triangle Guitar Society," McLaurin explained.

So welcome, Travis, and thanks to your wise teacher, Carlos Castilla of the Fayetteville Music School!

In a sitting room off the kitchen, an impromptu jam

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In the above photo, Todd Plessel, left, enjoys some flamenco music played by Jake Freiberger. Below are new member Travis McLaurin, left, and Donnie Stallings, with Grandfather, at the Jan. 12 TGS member party and play-in.



Review

Praties banish the blues

‘Murder ballads’ prove cathartic, while jigs and reels set toes to tapping

Mayhem is everywhere, as a whimsical [series of TV ads](#) for casualty insurance once reminded viewers.

And it has always been so, as Bob Vasile and Jane Peppler, aka the [Pratie Heads](#), chronicled in folk ballads during the second salon concert of the TGS 2018-19 season on Dec. 1. They presented a cavalcade of folly and woe, along with lighter fare — and with refreshing results. For Allstate was not the first to laugh at misfortune and so to banish it.



Bob Vasile, left, and Jane Peppler performing at Dec. 1 salon.

This was music making of the highest order — and fellowship to match — at the gracious Hope Valley home of Jane Anderson and John Reif. The couple’s long drawing room, originally a ballroom, was an ideal venue, a comfortable and intimate refuge from that night’s rain storm. The potluck that followed was bountiful. More than 40 people attended, many of them invited by the hosts.

Peppler and Vasile have a long and storied career in the Triangle folk music scene and beyond, performing for decades as the Pratie Heads and as members of other ensembles (“pratie” is Irish dialect for potato). They performed for TGS in 2004, as did Vasile in a solo guitar set that year. Most recently, they have been part of a trio with another local folk worthy, Red Clay Ramblers cofounder Jack Herrick, as Duck Duck Goose.

But as a duo, they possess a rare alchemy. Both display an instrumental and compositional virtuosity that sets them apart from most folk groups, often taking the music into harmonic modes and modulations

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Prez sez

Dear folks: Those of us who are fortunate enough to be drawn to the guitar are given insight into an intimate and very personal form of musical expression. In my college years I was fortunate to be on the boards of both the Tallahassee and the Dallas guitar societies, and I really enjoyed those groups. That’s why, when I moved to Durham 30 years ago, I insisted on starting a Trianglewide guitar club. Not only do we continue to bring some of the best guitar talent, but in our informal meetings we all get to share our guitar projects big and small and get ideas from each other. TGS exists to provide this mutual encouragement that is so necessary for developing our art of the guitar, for both us players and aficionados.

No better illustration can be seen than the recent TGS play-in and party, graciously hosted by Ed and MaryAnn Nirdlinger (see “All In for the Play-In” on page 1). First, five of our members presented pieces to a small but appreciative audience in the larger room with a fireplace, and then later, in a different room, members talked shop and jammed a bit while we enjoyed gourmet food and fine wine. In the second room we heard Alex Gordevsky’s passionate guitar and our host MaryAnn’s fine playing of a nice solo, and I wish both had played for us in the bigger room. ... Maybe next time.

For my part, I was pleased to have an informal setting to air some of my newly edited versions of the famous *25 Melodious Studies*, Opus

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Prez Sez

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60, by Carcassi. In this edition of the *TGS News* I have shared two of my favorites for your perusal (see “Musical Selections” on page 8).

So we will have one more play-in this spring (as Paul, our fine editor, calls them) and maybe another play-in party in the middle of the summer to keep us practicing, etc.

So please join us (if you haven’t yet renewed) in this ongoing love affair with the guitar. The 2018–2019 season still has much more to offer us members: house recitals, more informal get-togethers, and more editions of this newsletter (Paul says we will do five newsletters a year) to keep you informed and involved in guitar happenings across the Triangle and *beyond*. Aren’t we lucky to have our very own guitar club?

Thanks go out to MaryAnn and Ed for being such gracious hosts, to Todd Plessel for picking up and setting up the chairs and dinnerware for the party, and to **all** the folks who played guitar for us that night.

—“Prez” Randy Reed

Praties

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that are anything but simple or ordinary. They also have done a great job of ferreting out songs from centuries past with engaging — at times, gruesome — lyrics.

Exhibit A of the more lighthearted variety was the opening number, “What a Shocking World This Is for Scandal,” a first-person ditty by the early 19th century comedic songwriter Thomas Hudson. The narrator is an inveterate gossip who “never says nothing to nobody” about all his neighbors’ crimes and foibles, which he then ironically catalogues in hilarious detail. As Pepler said in introducing the song, it covers all seven deadly sins. It is a fitting introduction as well to their 2010 album “We Did It!,” which is subtitled “Songs of People Behaving Badly.”

They followed up with a contrastingly jazzy and upbeat instrumental, “Bagira’s Walk,” an original number that Vasile said he named for his cat. A medley of instrumental slip jigs and reels followed. Besides his steel-string guitar (tuned DADF#AD), Vasile played an octave mandolin (like a standard mandolin but larger and an octave lower). Pepler at times played violin, concertina, and viola. Instrumentals through the evening included two beautiful and quintessentially Celtic compositions by the 18th century blind Irish harpist Turlough O’Carolan.

Then came one of several ballads they played that were collected in Britain by Francis James Child in the 19th century. In “Lamkin,” the title character, a mason, exacts revenge for nonpayment by the lord of the manor by murdering the squire’s wife and child.

“Maybe that wasn’t the worst one,” Pepler warned when it was done. “Maybe *this* is the worst one,” as they launched into “Lucy Wan,” another Child ballad featuring both murder *and* incest.

An instrumental medley of “Willafjord/Music for a Found Harmonium” proved a brief respite, as mayhem returned with “Punch and Judy.” This made light of fatal spousal and child abuse but after the fashion of the puppet show that, however sadistic, generations of children have found hilarious. Because, after all, “there’s a little bit of Punch in each one of us,” one of the duo rightly observed.

One more dark and even occult Child ballad was the “Laily Worm and the Mackerel of the Sea,” a song popularized 45 or so years ago by the British folk rock group Steeleye Span.

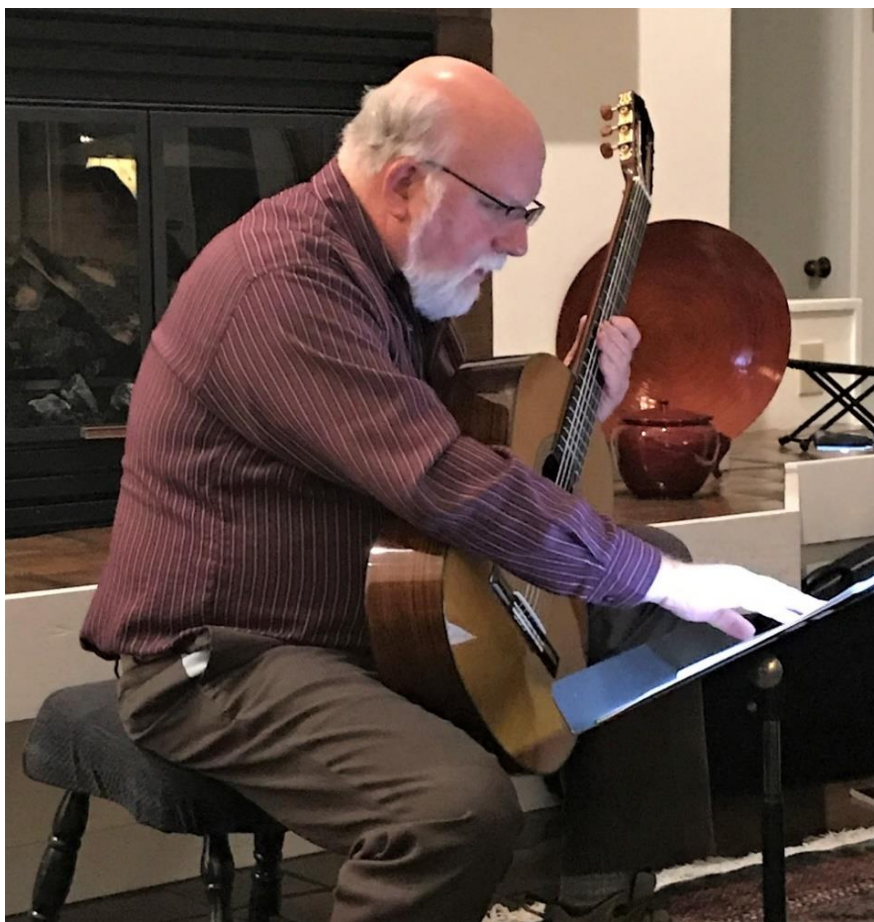
The Praties can be serious, though — poignant, even — and never more so than in “[Mayn Shvester Khaye](#),” which Pepler sang in Yiddish. Written by Binem Heller, the song commemorates the writer’s beloved sister, a victim of the Holocaust. Vasile accompanied in a winsome fingerstyle guitar arrangement. There were murmurs of appreciation amid the applause.

The Praties once again showed why they have endured in the folk music scene — they have a sophisticated understanding of their material and a creative approach to it, along with a spontaneity that never fails to connect with audiences. It’s easy to imagine their past years as ambassadors for this music, whether at the Smithsonian Institution or throughout North Carolina in the state’s Touring Artists program. And sometimes they’re all one needs to put a dark and stormy night into perfect perspective.

— Paul Bonner



In above photo, Alex Gorodezky, left, claps out a flamenco *compás*, as Travis McLaurin, center, and MaryAnn Nirdlinger look on. Below, Randy Reed demos several Carcassi etudes from his new edition, during the Jan. 12 TGS party and play-in.



Play-In

(continued from page 1)

session ran nearly continuously throughout the evening, with players trading tips and insights. In the main living room, a series of informal presentations ensued.

First, longtime member Jake Freiberger warmed things up with a series of flamenco pieces. McLaurin then shared several studies in C major from the method book of Matteo Carcassi.

Next, Krister Sweeney-Centeno, a high school student at the Durham School of the Arts and a guitar student of TGS President Randy Reed's, played two pieces by Johann Sebastian Bach, the *Bourrée* from the *Suite in E minor for Lute*, BWV 996, and the *Prelude* from the *Cello Suite No. 1 in G major* (guitar: D major), BWV 1007. He also played a *Study* by Fernando Sor and a *Caprice* by Carcassi.

Reed and Donnie Stallings played two anonymous Renaissance lute duos arranged by Frederick Noad that Stalling said they had played last summer at his niece's wedding.

Reed then performed *Etudes 1* through 11 and 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, and 23 (minus repeats) from the new edition he's preparing of the Carcassi Op. 60 *25 Melodious Studies* (two of them are in the Music Selection this month on page 8). These demonstrated such interpretive touches as playing certain passages and lines *pizzicato* to bring out a harpsichord-like effect. For No. 13, he called attention to the *campanella* effect, or bell-like use of open strings in a melody or passage.

Food and more jamming followed. Everyone could say he or she came away a winner.

Also of note...

Summer camps!

The 2019 [Eastern Music Festival](#) in Greensboro, July 13–27, is now accepting applications, including for its Guitar Program open to classical guitarists ages 14 and up. This two-week, in-depth session is taught by **Jason Vieaux, Julian Gray, Kami Rowan, and Thomas Viloteau**. Participants receive individual instruction, participate in masterclasses, and rehearse and perform with the **Festival Guitar Orchestra**. They also participate in chamber ensembles with other instrumentalists as well as in guitar duos, trios, and quartets. The program also includes a guitar competition for high school students and one for college and pre-professional students. Application deadline is Feb. 18.

Eastern Carolina University School of Music holds its [2019 Summer Guitar Workshop](#) July 13–16 on the university campus in Greenville. Directed by **Elliot Frank**, the workshop also features faculty and performers **Matteo Mela and Lorenzo Micheli (SoloDuo), Stephen Robinson, Andrew Zohn, the (Mary) Akerman–(Robert) Teixeira Duo, and François Fowler**. Tickets to the evening concerts featuring faculty are available separately.

The **Brevard Music Center** in Brevard will feature classical guitar sessions for [high school](#) and [college students](#) ages 14–29 on June 20–July 12 and July 13–Aug. 4, plus a [weeklong workshop for adults](#) ages 30 and up, June 3–8, all directed by **Adam Holzman**. Students may attend for either a three-week session or the full six weeks. Instruction covers interpretation, technique and sound production, with playing in guitar ensembles and a final class recital. Other faculty include **Andrew Zohn** and **Steve Kostelnik**. Application is by audition, deadline March 4.

The fifth annual [Shearer Summer Institute](#) of the **Aaron Shearer Foundation** will be held July 29–Aug. 4 at beautiful Zion National Park, Utah. Faculty include **Martha Masters, Thomas Kikta, Kami Rowan, and Alan Hirsh**. The institute is limited to 40 participants. Lodging and daily guitar activities will be at the Cable Mountain Lodge near the park entrance. The institute features guitar workshops and classes, masterclasses, private lessons, and guitar ensemble and orchestra rehearsals. Register by Feb. 15 to receive a tuition reduction of \$100 from full price of \$850. Teachers who bring at least five students may qualify for free tuition, meals, and private room.



Adam Holzman, left, will direct a series of summer programs and workshops at the Brevard Music Center.

Join or renew your membership!

Patron \$50+, Family \$35, Individual \$25, Student \$20.

Make check payable to the Triangle Guitar Society, Inc., and send with name, address, phone, e-mail information to:

Todd Plessel, Treasurer, 1207 Kintail Drive, Raleigh, NC 27613

Partner with TGS in fostering appreciation of guitar music with your tax-deductible membership and additional contributions.

Competitions and festivals

The **Appalachian State University** Hayes School of Music holds its 24th annual [GuitarFest and Solo Guitar Competition](#) April 5–7 on the university campus in Boone. The festival includes concerts, masterclasses, and workshops, and the competition is in four divisions. Evening concerts feature **Stephen Aron, Corde Cantanti, Douglas James, Pavel Steidl**, and the **GuitarFest Guitar Orchestra**. Registration deadline is April 1.

The annual [Southern Guitar Festival Competition](#) in Columbia, S.C., takes place June 7–9, featuring concerts, workshops, lectures and an international solo and ensemble competition. The competition

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Buying a concert classical guitar

Part 2: Where to buy from?

By Dennis Aberle

In Part 1 of this issue in the December 2018 issue, I discussed things to consider before buying a concert classical guitar. Part 2 addresses the question, “Should I work with an up-and-coming luthier who might give me a great price on a handmade guitar, should I buy a guitar from a dealer, or should I buy one directly from a luthier with more name recognition?”

I recently played at a beautiful venue, Isis Music Theater, in Asheville with our group, Flamenco Carolina and Ed Stephenson and the Paco Band. After the show, we were chatting with various audience members and were approached by a luthier, whose identity I won’t reveal. During my conversation with this guitar maker, he stated that he produced two classical guitar models: One was priced at \$3,500, and the other was \$6,500. He stated that both guitars were concert-worthy.

Given this information, I asked him what was the difference between the two guitars, knowing full well the answer I expected to hear. After he hedged my question for several minutes, I became impatient and asked him again to be more specific. Instead of telling me that he cut corners on the quality of wood and embellishments on the guitar (a typical and acceptable reason to produce a cheaper instrument), he told me that he cut corners with the amount of time that he spent “voicing the guitar.” In other words, he purposely tried to make an inferior instrument because of price.

Once I heard this answer, I’m sure my facial expression and body language communicated to him that his answer was utterly unacceptable to me. I suddenly became interested in talking with other audience members and wished him the best of luck as I walked in the opposite direction.

Now to be fair, I did not try his guitars. However, I feel very strongly that a luthier should always try to make any instrument he or she produces sound as good as possible and not purposely try to make an inferior instrument because of price. And, perhaps more importantly, he was a luthier with no name recognition. To be fair, other luthiers do this; however, they usually mark the label as such and/or use a factory to produce their lower-end instruments.

My second piece of advice is to attempt to find out this information before agreeing to work with a luthier. In my case, I believe I have given too many up-and-coming luthiers (and more famous ones, too) a chance before trying out other instruments in my price range.

The most successful story both for the luthier and me was that of my 1999 cedar and Indian rosewood guitar by Aaron Green, a guitar I use frequently. In 1999, Green had produced fewer than 30 guitars and was relatively unknown in the classical guitar world. I had played Dennis Koster’s guitar that Green had made earlier that year and was very impressed by the sound, playability, and quality of build. Aaron was (and still is) interested in working with me about my ideas for sound production, aesthetics, and size. He constructed an instrument that satisfied my need for volume, projection, ease of playability, and scale

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Also of note

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includes a division for nonclassical guitarists for the title of Guitar Idol S.C. Faculty and staff include Director **Marina Alexandra**, **Will Adams**, **the Beijing Guitar Duo**, **Joseph Ensley**, **Chris Essig**, **Tariel Iberi**, **Dragos Ilie**, **Jay Kacherski**, **Rod Lewis**, **Steve Sloan**, and **Chris Teves**.

Area concerts and recitals

Blues-rocker [Joe Bonamassa](#) and band perform at the Durham Performing Arts Center on March 18 at 8 p.m. Tickets \$89 to \$199.

South African classical guitarist [Derek Gripper](#), joined by with Congolese guitarist **Jaja Bashengezi** and Ugandan multinstrumentalist **Kinobe**, together as **Africa Strings**, perform March 25 at 8 p.m. at Motorco Music Hall, 723 Rigsbee Ave., in Durham, sponsored by Duke Performances. Gripper transcribes compositions originally for the 21-string kora. Tickets \$25 and \$10 for Duke students.

Sitar legacy [Anoushka Shankar](#) performs March 21 at 8 p.m. at Carolina Theatre in Durham, sponsored by Duke Performances. Tickets \$60, \$45, and \$35.

[Charlie Hunter](#), who plays an eight-string guitar-bass hybrid, performs with vocalist **Lucy Woodward** April 10 at 8 p.m. at Cat’s Cradle, 300 E. Main St., Carrboro. Tickets \$20 in advance, \$23 on the day of the event.

2018-19 TGS board

President/Music Editor: Randy

Reed, 3500 Winding Way,
Durham 27707, 919-490-
1920, rreed@duke.edu or
prez@triangleguitar.org

Program Director: Dennis

Aberle, Durham,
daberle@wcpss.net

Membership Coordinator: Billy

Switzer,
billy@triangleguitar.org

Newsletter Editor: Paul Bonner,

Durham,
phbonner@gmail.com or
editor@triangleguitar.org

Treasurer: Todd Plessel, 1207

Kintail Drive, Raleigh 27613,
919-596-9650,
Plessel.Todd@epamail.epa.gov

Secretary: Scott Merkle, Cary,

smerkle53@gmail.com

Webmaster: Michael Chua,

Chapel Hill,
web@triangleguitar.org

Member-at-large: Jim Butler,

Goldsboro,
jbutler028@nc.rr.com

The Triangle Guitar

Society News is published five times a year by the Triangle Guitar Society, Inc., a nonprofit member organization established for charitable purposes under 26 U.S.C. §501(c)(3) and serving the guitar enthusiast in the Triangle area of North Carolina since 1988. TGS is inspired by love of the musical arts and dedicated to nurturing an appreciation for the guitar. Direct inquiries to Paul Bonner, editor@triangleguitar.org.

Guitar buying

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length, as well as aesthetics. And the value of the instrument has increased over the past 20 years. Working directly with a luthier, whether he or she is up-and-coming or well-established, will guarantee that you have input into the final product. While customizations are fun and unique, you should be aware that what's pleasing to you may not be pleasing to the next owner of the guitar. Keep in mind that smaller than normal scale lengths (under 650mm) can be an obstacle if you need to sell it later. And, along those lines (since we are always thinking about resale), choosing exotic/atypical woods for the back and sides may look incredible but may seriously affect the resale value of the instrument.

At this point you may be asking, "Hey, Dennis, why are you being so boring?" The answer goes back to my first piece of advice, which is *resale*. Without trying to be condescending, I can almost guarantee that very few of you will be satisfied with your first concert guitar purchase and will want to sell it at some point in the future.

So, what is the best way to find the "perfect" guitar? Well, first, you may need to travel to one of the various guitar salons and make an appointment to try at least five guitars in your price range. Bring along a friend, preferably another guitarist who will not only listen and play the guitars for you but who can also drag you out of the shop before you overspend your hard-earned money. You can go back the next day and narrow down your choices. Playing multiple guitars from different luthiers is a big advantage of the guitar salon. Some salons have a buyback program (for less than you paid for the guitar) that may bring peace of mind to some buyers. However, often, the salons mark up the prices, so it is a good idea to do your research before offering the full retail price. If you like a luthier (who doesn't have an exclusive contract with the dealer), then you might contact the maker on your own and begin the process of having a guitar built for your unique needs.

While working with a luthier is exciting and may guarantee you all the things you want, it is not always possible. You may find a guitar at a guitar salon built in another country that blows you away. However, the luthier may have an exclusive contract with the salon, preventing you from dealing directly with him or her. Thus, buying the guitar from a salon may be the only option. Playing various luthiers' guitars in a salon is an excellent way to familiarize yourself with options in your price range.

In the next article, I will discuss the pros and cons of buying an instrument online.



Luthier Aaron Green builds a guitar in his workshop in Groton, Mass.

Musical selections

Two slur studies in A major from Opus 60 by Matteo Carcassi, edited by R. Reed

I am currently preparing the complete *25 Melodious Studies, Opus 60*, by Matteo Carcassi.

I have started with the 1851 Schott edition and, using this as my basis, I am producing what I think might be the first truly modern edition in the 21st century of this landmark work. There are a remarkable number of editions of Opus 60, but none of them have looked at this opus with a keen eye towards improving the actual musical text.

Vahdah Olcott Bickford merely added the right-hand fingering back in her 1920 edition with 19th century fingerings, which are fascinating but way out of date.

Miguel Llobet's edition has been as significant to the modernization of this work as was Andres Segovia's edition of his selection of 20 etudes by Fernando Sor. Both of these editions are more than 70 years old.

My goal in reprinting these studies is to show a whole new way of looking at these pieces in the 21st century with not just modern technique and fingering but, most importantly, showing new ways of sustaining notes and notating voices in ways that will inspire new ways of interpreting these lovely etudes.



Matteo Carcassi (1792-1853)

These two etudes are some of the happiest pieces I know for the guitar. Both are great slur and position studies for our instrument. Together, they provide a remarkable workout for reading all over positions 1 through 10 and myriad slur patterns as well. As in the Schott edition, I am using position markings to better help us see the left-hand fingerings. As Brian Jeffery says in his 2006 *Tecla* (345) reprint of the Schott edition, this system is "handy and economical." I don't indicate all positions, but in these two studies I have put in most positions above the second position.

In reference to left-hand fingering: In Study 9, I have taken out the "echo" slur used in measure 2 on the G#-F# in beat 2 in position 9 in the Schott and used a standard pull-off in position 7, giving us a stronger slur in the theme. In his edition, Miguel Llobet also uses an echo slur between notes B and A in the same measure in 7th position. With practice, this two-fret shift becomes easy and makes one wonder why no one thought to use it before. As this fingering shows up eight times, it does make a difference.

In Study 23, in the opening measure, I have added a downward stemming of the opening C# and refingered the measure, allowing for a sustain in this middle voice. Similarly, starting in measure 9, I have shown that by adding a stemming down (with sustain) of the melody notes on many of the primary beats, the top voice joins the bass voice for sustained dotted half notes and dotted quarter notes, and this happens 27 times in the remainder of this study.

I have also changed a few notes: In Study 9, measure 22, I have continued from the preceding measure the pedal E in the two bass notes rather than the A's in the original, and this "correction" is a dramatic improvement, to the point that I think it is an actual correction! It makes the F's in the bass in the measure that follows more dramatic, whereas after the A's, they sound odd. In measure 26 I have sustained the low E, thus extending the dominant harmony for this tiny cadenza.

And, speaking of tiny cadenzas, in Study 23 at measure 28, I have switched to 6/8 meter and added six new measures, thus rewriting the ending to add in a longer cadenza.

Let me know what you think of these new versions.

No.9

Allegretto grazioso

I i m a m IV i m a m IX i m VII i m II i m

mf

3 i m a m III i m a m IX i m IV i m a m

VI simile IX i m i m i II

9 I II

f p i p p i p i

12 IX VIII

mp

15 p m i mp

18 VIII

21 III IV VIII I

24 VII V I VII

Use thumb sweep flesh tone rest stroke int@

27

Use thumb sweep flesh tone rest stroke int@

31 XII

35

D.C.al
Fine