

Guitarist

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MGS & THE ORDWAY PRESENT

Love, jealousy, anger, merriment & death!

Music & Dance of Spain's Jews & Gypsies

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A NEW WORK FOR FLUTE & GUITAR

The Minnesota Guitar Society and the Upper Midwest Flute Association are issuing a call for proposals from Minnesota resident composers to write a new work for flute and guitar.

The work, to be at least twelve minutes in length, will be premiered in the Twin Cities during the 1990-91 concert season by a flautist chosen by the Upper Midwest Flute Association and by guitarist Alan Johnston, chairman of the guitar department at the MacPhail Center for the Arts. The commission for the work will be \$1200.00 with additional money going toward publicity and other expenses associated with the premiere.

Proposals should include a curriculum vitae, scores and cassette tapes of two works (complete), a written proposal outlining the formal concept of the proposed work, and a description of any experience with the two instruments (a demonstrated ability to write for either or both instruments will strengthen the proposal). Any anticipated problems in meeting a Fall 1990 completion date should be noted in the application. In order to have materials returned, please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope with your proposal. Proposals will be reviewed by a panel chosen by the Minnesota Guitar Society and the Upper Midwest Flute Association, and upon the recommendation of the panel, the commission will be awarded to the one composer whose proposal is deemed to be the strongest. Applicants will be notified in writing by May 1, 1990 of the status of their proposals. Proposals must be postmarked by March 10, 1990 and should be mailed to the Minnesota Guitar Society, P.O. Box 14986, Minneapolis, MN 55414. This project is made possible in part by a grant from the Honeywell Foundation.

Contact person: Alan Johnston, 331-5006. ■

Tailgatin' with MGQ

Minnesota Guitar Society's Monthly Forum

The Minneapolis Guitar Quartet will perform the American premiere of the "Quartet" by Michael Blake Watkins on January 28 at 1:30 p.m. in the Art Room of the Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church at 525 Groveland Avenue in Minneapolis. Members of the Minneapolis Guitar Quartet will also perform solo guitar works by Sir Michael Tippett, Alberto Ginastera and Lewis Nielson.

MGS & THE ORDWAY PRESENT:



MUSIC & DANCE OF SPAIN'S JEWS & GYPSIES

THE ORDWAY MUSIC THEATRE and MINNESOTA GUITAR SOCIETY will jointly present "Music and Dance of Spain's Jews and Gypsies" on February 17 and 18 at 8 p.m. in the Ordway's McKnight Theatre. An exciting collaboration between two Minnesota-based ensembles, Voices of Sepharad and Rincon del Flamenco, the show will feature a company of ten singers, dancers, and instrumentalists. Tickets are \$10 (\$8 Minnesota Dance Alliance or Minnesota Guitar Society members). For reservations and further information, call the Ordway at 224-4222.

While flamenco song and dance are universally recognized as Spain's cultural treasure, the stunning Jewish musical tradition which originated in Medieval Spain (Sepharad in Hebrew) and deeply influenced flamenco is less well-known. "Music and Dance of Spain's Jews and Gypsies" explores the common ground of Sephardic and Gypsy art as well as the separate traditions which evolved within Spain and abroad. In the case of the Sephardim, these communities encompassed much of the Mediterranean world (Morocco, Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Israel), where the Jews re-settled after their expulsion from Spain in 1492.

Voices of Sepharad features vocalist David Harris, dancer-choreographer Judith Brin Ingber, percussionist Mick LaBriola, and guitarist Scott Davies, who performs with Rincon del Flamenco as well. Also, featured in Rincon are vocalist Maria Elena "La Cordobesa," dancers Joan Bryers, Joanne Weber, and Trudy Gustafson, and guitarists Michael Ziegahn and Mikhail Davies.

Voices of Sepharad was founded in 1986 in response to a commission by the Jewish Community Center of Greater Minneapolis. They have since performed to critical acclaim throughout the Midwest and in Spain. All arrangements of their music are developed collaboratively and attempt to fuse the traditions of the Sephardic past with a contemporary sensibility. The group recently released its debut recording, "Pasion;" for more information, call 227-2583.

Rincon del Flamenco, literally "an inside corner of flamenco," is a seven-member ensemble which specializes in the music, song and dance of Southern Spain. Its members have been performing separately and together for more than fifteen years in Minnesota, Chicago and Spain. ■

This event is free and open to the public and is sponsored by the Minnesota Guitar Society as a part of their monthly Forum series, which is made possible by a grant from the Metropolitan Council.

This forum, which focuses on recent 20th century compositions, features Alan Johnston, performing the "Blue Guitar," a sonata by Sir Michael Tippett; Joseph Hagedorn, per-

forming the "Sonata" by Alberto Ginastera; and David Crittenden performing "In Dreams Five Angels" by American composer, Lewis Nielson.

This forum has been carefully scheduled early in the day in order to stave off any detractor of Super Bowl attendance by the broad-minded. For further information, contact Joe Haus at 224-7366. ■



Autoharp Champ

KAREN MUELLER

By Cathy Nixon

Karen Mueller, 1986 International Autoharp Champion and pretty good flat-picker as well, is enthusiastically adding to the richness of the Twin Cities music scene. Her personal spiritual philosophy and drive to make good music are inseparable to Karen as she confidently expands her horizons with the same beautiful clarity and strong rhythms that characterize the sounds of her autoharp.

Karen was born and raised in Winfield, Kansas, site of the Walnut Valley Festival, one of the biggest folk and bluegrass festivals in the country. Started 18 years ago by Stu Mossman, a fine local luthier of national acclaim, the festival became the site of the national flat-picking and national finger-picking championships. Local guitarist Phil Heywood holds one of the national finger-picking championship titles. Working against the same sort of tough competition, Karen became the international autoharp champion in 1986.

Karen's odyssey to the autoharp championship began with the change from her classical piano background, as she started to play the guitar at age 14. She was gradually drawn to folk and bluegrass music by the sounds and the communal atmosphere of the Walnut Valley Festival. It was at the 1978 Festival that Karen was smitten with the autoharp. "I heard the autoharp played beautifully for the first time at the Festival by a man named Bryan Bowers," she recalled, "He's a visible, pied-piper, charismatic performer . . . In Appalachia, the autoharp has been pretty much preserved with its sort of rough edge. Bryan had instead developed a smooth, flow-

ing and beautiful style, like bells ringing. I was taken with it. There was an autoharp lying around the house, so I bought myself one of his records and taught myself to play from it."

In 1981 Karen entered her first autoharp competition at the Walnut Valley Festival. "I entered every year," she said, "Each time I played in the competition was just as much a personal gauge for myself . . . Playing in the year that I won, I just felt this energy channeling through me. Right before the festival, a friend who puts out an autoharp magazine in California had called me about doing some teaching, and said, 'You know you're going to win.' I'd gotten third the year before." The year Karen won was the 15th anniversary of the Festival, and the general rule that winners couldn't re-enter the competition for five years had been dropped, making the competition particularly intense.

Her focus on the autoharp has made Karen one of those musicians to be emulated. Well-known among the autoharp and folk community, Karen has travelled through various parts of the country performing and teaching. She has given autoharp workshops at Augusta Heritage Center, Elkins, W. Va.; Old Town School of Folk Music, Chicago, Ill.; Walnut Valley Festival, Winfield, Ks.; Swallow Hill Music Society, Denver, Co. When she first moved to Minnesota, early in 1989, Karen worked through The Eclectic Company in Minneapolis, giving one to two week artist-in-residence programs (co-sponsored by the Minnesota State Arts Board) in Minneapolis, Big Lake, Owatonna, and Plainview, Mn. She currently teaches

autoharp, guitar and dulcimer through the West Bank School of Music and the Homestead Pickin' Parlor.

For those of us who don't know, Karen explained that an autoharp is a derivative of a zither. The term "autoharp" is actually a brand name. It was invented a little over a hundred years ago by a German man to demonstrate a new system of musical notation he had developed. Eventually, the autoharp became a popular parlour instrument because it was fairly simple to play. Although its many strings give it a complicated appearance, the strings are set up in a chromatic pattern and each chord bar held down by the left hand (not individual fingers) deadens certain strings so that the right hand can strum a particular chord. However, to play melodies at Karen's level of skill, one has to be able to change chords quickly to play the desired notes. Her finger-picking and various rhythm patterns bring out the depth of the autoharp's sound, ringing like many beautiful instruments instead of only one.

Karen also enjoys teaching others to play the autoharp. She likes sharing shortcuts she's learned through trial and error. In giving advice for those who want to learn, Karen made sure to say that we should remember to enjoy playing and feel free to experiment. "There's lots of music for it," she said, "There's a tablature system that, like guitar tabs, tell you what chord bar to push down and what notes to pluck . . . They give rhythm work and melody playing techniques." When asked what other advice she could give to aspiring autoharpists, Karen laughed mischievously and said, "See me!"

Karen's immediate goal is to establish herself as a solo artist, and also to continue her work with other musicians. More important, in the long run, is her personal goal to make a spiritual connection with others through her music. That philosophy not only affects her solo work, but also the work she does with others. Talking about how she got together with Full Circle, her first band, Karen said, "We had all pretty much connected in some way or another, having pretty much the same musical tastes. We bonded with that, and also wanted to pursue working as a band. We also, as a group, had a sense of performance, as being more than just standing up and playing in front of people, as a way to make a connection with your audience."

Other bands Karen has worked with and continues to work with include NewGrange, Catfish Roe and the Sunshine Band, which plays especially for children. Karen is also excited about her work with Jennifer Holt, formerly of Tetes Noires. She describes her music with Jennifer as having a strong, driving acoustic sound. The songs are written and sung by Jennifer and Karen plays the guitar and creates the instrumentals. A conga player completes the group. The style of the songs varies, in-

MUELLER to page 13.

Getting on down to the Blues line

This is the last of a two-part article based on an interview with Dave "Snaker" Ray.

By Emily Kretschmer

The blues scuffle

Ray's guitars include a replica of the Holzapfel twelve-string he owned in the '60s and '70s, a six-string Gibson Byrdland, a Les Paul Jr. with a pickup called Pearly Gates (a Billy Gibbons pickup) and his favorite, a Johnny Smith that he said "just knocks me out." Ray bought the Holzapfel from Eric Darling in the early '60s, had it measured and spec'd out. He said it was "built like a house," it was so sturdy. The Holzapfel was stolen from him in the '70s in Montreal. Roddy Belleville (formerly of Belleville-Hoffman guitars) was one of the guys who'd spec'd it, and he built the replica that Ray's playing now. The Johnny Smith, Ray Said, is stock, except it has two pickups, which makes it "kind of a rare bird." It has a very responsive, big fat sound, he said, and he's played it almost exclusively since he got it. His amp is a Musicman RD-50.

During the '60s Ray listened primarily to Mississippi Delta bluesmen—Blind Lemon, Tommy McClennan, Son House, Skip James and Robert Johnson. He jumped right over the early '40s, he said, and started listening to Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, and especially Lowell Fulson. He doesn't currently listen to blues, he said, unless actively researching to do a recording, or looking for material.

Now, and for about the past 10 years, Ray said, he's been listening to bebop and post-bebop small combo jazz when he wants to listen to music. Especially the horn players, like Coltrane, Sonny Stitt. "Hard-driving tenor-led or alto-led jazz groups. All of them," Ray said. "Dexter Gordon on down. The whole lot."

Not surprisingly, Ray's listening preferences appear to parallel the direction he's interested in taking musically. "It's taken me a long time to get to a position where I can hold my own on the instrument," Ray said. "I feel now like I can, but I'd get lost immediately if I was trying to comp behind some standard traditional kind of jazz tune, because I don't have any real handle on the flow of it.

"I got some computer programs, and I'm doing a little ear training. I'd like to get to the point where I could actually comp behind some jazz standards instead of just doing blueses. But I'm so firmly seated in the blues and so inoculated with three chord changes



Dave "Snaker" Ray 1963.

that it's hard for me to pop out of there and do anything else."

Most of the dozen or so LPs Ray's recorded, ensemble and solo, are out of print and off the racks, but perhaps less difficult to locate than the "thin volume of poetry" by Ray published by friends a number of years back. A couple of phone calls, however, recently turned up single copies of "More Blues, Rags & Hollers" and Ray's '77 solo album, "Kid Man," on local shelves. Ray and Glover's '87 LP, "Legends in Our Spare Time," is probably as hard to get as their single, "Mattie Mae," backed by "I've Been Watching You." Ray and Glover are currently working on another LP, which should be out in early 1990, according to Ray.

In 1988 Ray played about four or five times outside St. Anthony East, he said, and about half a dozen times in 1989. The Volunteers of the Blue Knight played Cedarfest and a private wedding, and Ray and Glover played in front of Dr. John at First Avenue and at the Walker Movies in the Park concert series dur-

ing the summer. Ray and Glover also made appearances at the Uptown, First Avenue and Seventh Street Entry in the past few years, as well as with John Koerner at the World Theater.

Earlier this year, Ray played a solo acoustic gig at the Milwaukee Conservatory, after a 15-year hiatus from that town. I told him I'd heard he was warmly received. "It always seems you get a little more response, a little more respect, a little more oomph, a little more bounce to the ounce," Ray said, "out of town than you do in town. The gigs in town have been good in some respects, but too far and few between to ever make a living at, and too poorly attended just because we're here and they can see us any night. Why bother? That type of thing.

"Plus, the type of music that we play, that I play, is not the type of music that is marketed extensively . . . I'm really off in my own little zone, and how many times do you have to see that to know where it's at?

"It's a scuffle if you want to make a living playing the blues," Ray said. "Even the major black powers of the blues who have been rediscovered never made any money at it. John Lee was at it for years. He doesn't get paid any more than anybody else, I don't think. Bobby Blue Bland probably makes a buck here and there. B. B. King is certainly making some money at it, but I doubt if he's making as much money as say, Ella Fitzgerald, with whom he's a contemporary.

"There's a real up-and-down marketability to blues. Sometimes it's popular and sometimes it isn't. The appeal has got a real cyclical nature. Now we're hearing more of it than ever because there's a lot of emerging players and it's a rudimentary form they can get into right away and make a lot of big noise and make some money. Like Robert Cray and George Thorogood. There are guys who have been wandering the face of earth for years, playing a hell of a lot more than they're playing, and making a hell of a lot less money.

"Last time I talked to Johnny Hammond, he was playing 220 nights a year. I mean he's making a living, but it's not more than he'd make selling insurance."

There was a time Ray entertained an active dream of making a lot of money playing music. "I couldn't pursue it hard enough and play the hands that were required to do it," he

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Dave Ray, Walker Art Center.

1974.

said. "Nothing dirty about it necessarily, but I was unable to concentrate on what I was supposed to be concentrating on in order to make it in the musical world. It's a hustle," Ray said, "and it's a hard hustle."

I reminded Ray of what he'd said in Keller's 1981 interview (referenced in part one) about just wanting to play his axe. "That's all I wanted to do," he said. "That's all I still want to do. So now that I have a job, I'm making a living, everything's cool. I, in fact, can play my axe, provided I can find some place to play."

"It's a matter of time and emphasis. That's why I've got a real job. I don't want to try to make a living being a musician. It's an impossibility as far as I'm concerned. I'd rather have a job that already has as its basic principle or premise the idea of talking to people all day long and getting a buck for it rather than having to talk to people, then try to get my head in a musical space and get a buck for it. In other words, I don't want to be calling a bunch of club owners and talking to booking agents and recording people, then try to put on another mask and play music to the same end."

"I'd rather have the music be what it is for me now, which is a divorced, separate reality which I can pursue at my own pace without having to rely on it for a livelihood. I'm perfectly satisfied with the way my musical career is going right now. Mainly completely isolated, completely unheralded, and unknown by any except a select few who have figured out where it is that I play."

"As I said, I'm trying to pursue other things [jazz and theory] but I don't have the attitude about it that drives me to pursue it too compulsively. There's not too much to be said for true artistic pursuit *per se*. Most guys who are painting, sculpting, writing music—whatever they're doing—have in the back of their minds some place the idea of making a buck doing it. Obviously, you gotta eat."

"There may be a few pure souls out there who don't care whether they eat or not. True Van Gogh-ian spirit, or whatever. I haven't met any of them," Ray said. "Most people, as much as they practice, entertain the idea of maybe reaping a buck from their efforts. After years of trying it, I decided I wasn't going to do it quite that way anymore. So now when I pursue it, I do it from the pure, gleeful standpoint of doing it just for the hell of it."

"Well," Ray said. "I'll take the money if somebody wants to give me a job."

The role of soul

Ray told me about a student who came to him for a lesson. "This 15-year-old guy came in and he had this ornately carved Telecaster that he'd made himself, and he said he wanted to learn how to play the blues. So we sat there, and I said, 'Well, what can you do?' And the guy just blew me away; he was just an unbelievable player. I said, 'Go back up to the front and get your five bucks back and come back here and show me what you're doing.' That's when I decided I wasn't cut out to teach."

"I mean in the first place most of these guys can blow me right off the stand, and in the second place I don't really have that firm a background. I'm just a musical neophyte when you come down to the technology of it. These guys know a hell of a lot more than I do from reading *Guitar Player* magazine, to say nothing of sitting around, like I did when I first started playing, playing for about 24 hours a day for 3 years, compulsively. Playing every time you got a chance. I spent a lot of time doing that, but I didn't spend any time trying to figure out technically what I was doing. I was busy learning songs by rote."

"I don't see much benefit in teaching a person who doesn't know anything about music by rote, because that's the way I learned and it hasn't done me a hell of a lot of good. I'd much rather know how to count and what relationship C bears to C#, than I would know how to play from a C to a C#. I'd rather have a firmer harmonic understanding than I do."

"It's much harder to learn [theory] after you've been playing for a long time than it is to learn it in the first place. Some people say that if you know it you never end up being able to blow," Ray said. "I don't particularly subscribe to that theory. I have heard countless people say about Tommy [Ray], who's completely unschooled in piano playing—'I've taken piano lessons for years, and I've played Bach and Beethoven, and I can't play the piano like that. What's going on?'—They feel like they're overtrained to be able to get down. Well, that's bullshit. The more technique you have the better able you are to play. So that's just some psychological routine that people are averted into and it doesn't have a damn thing to do with being able to play. Now we're talking about a matter of soul, not of technique."

Ray said Glover and he have a "sympatico" thing going which has never necessitated paying close attention to counting. "Nobody really cared about when the turnaround comes or how many bars there are, and I don't really care either, you know, when I'm playing alone, or just with Tony. But it does make a difference, of course, with the band, because it'd be a nice idea if everybody could make the same chord changes at the same time," Ray said, laughing. "But it really is a trial for me, especially singing and playing at the same time and trying to make the changes."

With the band, Ray said, "It's been a real give-and-take situation. It's really advanced my ability to count and to hear the change go by. I've gained a better understanding of time and phrasing, and I'm sure that's what they've all gotten out of it, too. Playing ensemble is a much different deal than playing alone. There's no way around it. It's a much different drill."

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"I've been playing for about 30 years or something like that, and it's only been within the last couple of years that I've gotten any indication at all that I might someday be able to count properly. It's something I've had consistent difficulty with. I try to make things come out twelve bars and it really doesn't come out.

"There's one particularly idiosyncratic thing that I've noticed since I've started concentrating on it," Ray said. "There's usually an additional two or three beats at the end of the twelfth bar where I think I'm taking a breath and trying to get lined up to start singing the next verse.

"Blues is idiosyncratic. When you start listening to a lot of the old country solo blues guys, you won't hear much consistency there for twelve bars. Some of them were a little more trained. It all falls in the general realm of somewhere around twelve bars.—I mean the ones that aren't 8, 16, 24, and 32 bar blueses—structured blueses. Listening to some of these guys—Blind Boy Fuller and guys like that—they really are right on the money. Leadbelly doesn't scan very consistently.

"Most of the guys just picked them [the tunes] up by rote the same way I did. You remember them according to the verse more than the tune. I never knew that many instrumentals. I still don't. There was no need to remember them from a count standpoint. It all sort of revolved around the vocal, which is kind of free-form, and then the guitar just kind of filled in around the vocal."

Of course, it's actually more structured than that, Ray explained. "Typically, twelve bars is divided. The first four bars are the one chord, then you switch to the four chord, and back to the one chord. By that time, the end of the sixth bar, the first two lines of the verse are past. Then you usually throw in the third somewhere along the middle of the twelve bars. You got some in the middle and some on the end that gets filled in musically. I mean that's really a rough sketch . . . and there's a million variants, but that's the typical pattern."

"When you hear someone play, whatever instrument it is, just like when you read a book or when you, whatever," Ray said, "you can tell the difference between a pure technician and a person who's expressing something that they know and understand and want to share.

"That's the comment I was making about George Thorogood and Robert Cray and Johnny Winter. They're nuts players," Ray said, "from a technical standpoint. They don't particularly speak to me. It's a matter of being on a different wavelength. I could be uppity and say that they didn't have any soul, but I'm not about to make that value judg-

ment. There are some people, obviously, who buy those records by the millions, to whom

"I'm not going to say that they're only in it for the money, that they don't deal with what they're playing. I'm merely stating that I don't respond to them. And privately, of course, I would say that they don't have any soul. But that's my own opinion, which I have a lot of."

they do strike a respondent note. I don't happen to be one of them. I'm not going to say that they're only in it for the money, that they don't deal with what they're playing. I'm merely stating that I don't respond to them. And privately, of course, I would say that they don't have any soul. But that's my own opinion, which I have a lot of."

Zen arrow

I asked Ray if he ever felt that working in the insurance business interfered with what he'd like to be doing musically. "Very rarely," he said. "Sometimes it does, but on the other hand, if I didn't actively keep up with the money-making career I have, I wouldn't be

able to play the music at all. Because it's a proven fact that I can't make any money playing music. So if I took more time to devote to it I wouldn't be getting paid for it, and if I wasn't getting paid for it I wouldn't be able to pay the rent, and then what? That's where it's at."

It's pretty frustrating for a lot of artists, I said.

"I think so, too," Ray said. "But I don't consider myself an artist. I don't think of my playing, my writing of music, or my whatever level of achievement on the instrument, as being art. I never have thought of it that way.

"I think of myself, I suppose, as a blues interpreter or lyricist before I think of myself as a blues guitarist. I don't feel I actually started playing until about two years ago, but then I've felt like that every year since I started playing."

If he didn't consider himself an artist, then who did he think was? I wanted to know.

"It's obvious when you listen to them that it's their main pursuit," Ray said, "and it has paid off for them possibly not because of anything like innate talent, which I don't really

RAY to 9.

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INTERVIEW

Emily Remler
at the Dakota

By Joan Griffith

On Nov. 13-15, jazz guitarist Emily Remler appeared in St. Paul at the Dakota Bar. Her album "East to Wes" released this year, is the latest of many on the Concord label. She is known as a mainstream guitarist in the great tradition of Wes Montgomery and Joe Pass. Emily's stay in the Twin Cities included a clinic at the Guitar Center in Minneapolis as well as her six—very swinging—shows at the Dakota.

Emily was kind enough to spend a break between sets answering a few questions for this interviewer.

Joan Griffith: When did you start playing the guitar?

Emily Remler: I actually started playing the piano first. I took lessons from about age 3 to 10. I picked up the guitar in high school and right away had a real affinity for it.

JG: Are there other musicians in your family?

ER: No, not really. I have a brother who works for the state department and a sister who is a lawyer. My dad, however, is a real emotional, involved listener. We'd be listening to something and he would point to his arm and say "look! goose bumps."

JG: Did you always want to play jazz?

ER: No, I didn't like jazz at all. I was more interested in some rock, the Mahavishnu thing.

JG: How did that change?

ER: I can see how people don't like jazz. I had to be exposed to it. After high school I went to Berklee (Boston) and a fellow student, a guy named Chuck Lowe, a great guitar player, gave me a couple of Wes Montgomery and Pat Martino albums to listen to. And that was it. I recognized the guitar, you know that sound, that sweet sound.

JG: Were there some other albums and guitarists that really influenced you?

ER: Oh yeah. Pat Metheny's "Bright Sized Life" a great album. The Joe Pass "Virtuoso" records. He plays so many beautiful melodies. The way I see it, jazz guitar falls into two categories. Sort of a black and white thing. There's the influence of Charlie Christian on one side and Django Reinhart on the other. I prefer the more laid back style like Charlie Christian and Wes Montgomery to playing ahead of the beat like Django. Larry Coryell fits more in that category.

JG: How about musicians other than guitarists that have influenced your style?

ER: Coltrane and Bill Evans, of course . . . and Egberto Gismonti. Speaking of Bill Evans—Lenny Breau, the Canadian guitarist—borrowed a lot from Bill Evans. I don't like his single note solos, he came from a country background and they can be kind of square. But the chords are great. McCoy Tyner has been a big influence, too. I've transcribed and used some of his little chords.

JG: You said at the clinic that you went from Berklee to New Orleans. Did you have a gig there?

ER: No, actually I went there with a boyfriend. I stayed in New Orleans for about three years, played a lot of gigs—played everything—clubs, shows, Dixieland, the Neville Brothers. A break came when I got the Nancy Wilson Show—that got me back to New York. I also met Carl Jefferson from Concord through Herb Ellis when I was down there. I met him but it was about three years later that I played on a Concord festival—that was a big break.

JG: Concord has labeled you a "mainstream" artist. How do you feel about that?

ER: That's okay. My feel and time concept are really mainstream. I like to play other music though. I've studied fusion and Indian music, blues. I'm not crazy about country. There is one thing I'm kind of narrow-minded about. I can't stand a bebop-rock mix. You know—somebody playing a bop solo and throwing in some rock bends. To me, you need that sound; it's all part of the style. You know that album with me and Larry Coryell. Our sounds and styles and times are so different—I love the guy, but I had a stiff neck the whole time we were playing together.

JG: Who is your favorite guitar player for duets?

ER: This guy named Martin Taylor. He's Scottish. He's done some stuff with Stephan Grappelli. He sounds like a cross between Benson and Pass. He's great! You'll be hearing about him.

JB: Here at the Dakota you just have bass and drums with you. Is this your favorite format?

ER: The trio is good for guitar. It gives you a lot of freedom with the melody and chords. But I've got a band in New York. Keyboards, bass, drums, percussion and trumpet or trombone. We just recorded an album, my pride and joy, with eleven original tunes on it. The album is not released—I'm still looking for a label that will do some promoting. I love playing the guitar trio, but I'm ready for a change from playing straight ahead. It's been twelve years. I'd also like to play some other places besides jazz clubs. Do some different things.

JG: If you aren't the soloist, who do you like to accompany?

ER: I've really enjoyed playing with McCoy Tyner, Lyle Mays and Michael Brecker. I actually don't like to accompany that much. I like playing the melody myself. As for singers—I've played a lot with singers—Nancy Wilson, Astrud Gilberto, mostly I'm not crazy about it. You know, though, my most favorite singer is Rosemary Clooney. She sings the melody just like it was written. Simple and clear, she doesn't turn everything into a blues scale. I could understand every word of the lyrics, it was great!

JG: Thanks, Emily, for your time. Hope you come back soon—maybe with your new band.

ER: Me, too. That would be great. ■

Stephen Kakos

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Get the folk on down . . .

Cedar Cultural Center is alive & well

By Bill Connell

Okay, so you're sitting around for the umpteenth time wishing for someplace, anyplace to go and listen to folk music. No, not just listen, but be a part of the music, dancing the night away and having a ball.

Fret no more, folkniks, the Cedar Cultural Center is here to help.

Located at 516 Cedar Avenue in the old Cedar Theater, the center has been putting on events since last March, to the joy of the folk community.

Those who knew the old theater knew a dark and deadly serious place, with black and navy decor and formal theater seating, but they would not know it now. Remodeling began with raising the theater floor to level. The stage was moved from the far end to the middle of one side, to give a more accessible and intimate feel. The walls and ceiling were painted a more cheerful and open white. Most importantly though, the old stage floor was topped off with a wood parquet dance floor, and seating is via easily-moved (in case someone feels like dancing) folding chairs. Even the ticket prices are the very user-friendly single-digit range (according to event).

"It's really nice having a dance hall again," artistic director Deborah Martin. While other places may have folk musicians, they don't have the capacity, dancing or fine Mexican food and beer and wine.

The Cedar Cultural Center Cafe (say that ten times quickly) opened in the fall. The fine Mexican food comes from the Coronado restaurant in St. Paul, which was voted the best Mexican food in the city by one of those local weeklies. Originally open only for shows and from 11-2 for lunch, hours should have been extended until 9 p.m. by the time you read this. Seating is in the lobby, which offers perfect people-watching on Cedar and is conveniently only five dance steps from the main hall.

The establishment of the center last March filled a large gap in the local folk scene left when the Coffeehouse Extempore closed its doors. Despite the fact that the Cedar Center is in the final location of the Extemp, and the fact that they are both premiere folk halls, and the fact that Martin worked there for a couple of years, there is no connection between the two.

"It's just a coincidence that we're in the same building," said Martin, who has been booking shows independently in the area since the mid-1970's. "It's kinda like saying First Avenue and the Fine Line are connected

somehow."

There is a difference in philosophy between the two institutions as well. The Extemp was around long enough to build a real community feel with poetry readings and music lessons, expanding in the latter years to include rock and jazz. Martin wants the closeness, but sticking to more of the straight folk music.

"[The Extemp had] a real comfortable environment. It was really intimate," she said. That intimacy was most important, she said because once you've seen a performance in a very intimate setting, the same show later at a bigger hall loses much in the transition.

Martin's booking career started with a benefit show of Woody Guthrie music at the Whole Coffeehouse in the University of Minnesota Coffman Union. She has been booking and promoting individual performances and festivals ever since. The creation of the Cedar Center was as much of convenience as of need for one in the area.

"I've probably been to every hall in the Twin Cities," she said. "It's a lot easier having a regular hall 30 nights a month, rather than having to go out and rent a hall for each event."

All of Martin's promoting now is for the center, although she didn't rule out a possible festival or two.

The types of shows she books for the center include about half local and half national and international and continue with what she has done over the years. "I try to get performers with a following, those who are the best in their line of performance."

One such typical performer is Martin Carthy, coming in February. Renowned for his unique style of fingerpicking, he has, for years, been regarded as one of the legends of folk, and certainly one of the best in the field.

The folk scene has changed in many ways over the years, and not always for the better.

Martin described it as "interesting."

"It's different than it used to be. There used to be no problem filling up a hall, people would just come for the event," she said. "We have to work a lot harder now to get the same number of people to show up."

It certainly hasn't gotten any easier to open a new concert hall. While the building was donated to the center, it took a few loans to cover needed repairs and the aforementioned remodeling. The center is self-sufficient through ticket sales, but they only cover one

coat of paint on the ceiling and there are only two regular staff members, Martin and Director Mary Ann Dotson. A group of volunteers cover a lot of the work, down to the promotional posters done by a friend of a friend or something like that.

Things are looking up, though, with expanded Cafe hours, and possibly a new staff member on the way, along with a great winter schedule. Highlights include Martin Carthy in February and Peggy Seeger tentatively scheduled for January 10.

Aside from feature shows, the center has dancing every Wednesday night (this month is Contra, Cajun and Western swing), and a local showcase at the end of each month.

So the next time you're sitting around be-moaning the fate of folk music, go on down to the Cedar Cultural Center and get a fix. But don't be surprised if you meet someone coming from Canada doing the same thing. ■

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RAY from 6.

believe in, but just because of longevity or perseverance. And it pops right off the grooves, or it comes right off the stage at you. I can think of a couple of guitar players right offhand that strike me that way, one of whom is Tal Farlow. I mean, when you listen to Tal Farlow's poppin' and burnin' record there is something going on there that is not readily accessible to the average run-of-the-mill guitar-playing guy.

"Even a guy that's played for thirty years like I have doesn't play like Tal Farlow, and the reason why is because I've never had that particular dedication that he apparently has had. Either that or he is on some kind of wild mushrooms that I can't find.

"The difference between listening to Tal Farlow and Dave Ray," Ray said, "is that Tal Farlow comes poppin' off the groove and chokes you. My stuff isn't quite that aggressive or knowledgeable sounding."

There are others—Joe Pass and Barney Kessel—although Ray admits it's not their style so much as the fact they've "spent a lot of time woodshedding," that he admires. "A lot more time than I have, you know. Spent time with theory, spent time with patterns, spent time with scales, which I, up until a couple of years ago, never paid any attention to at all.

"The word I've been looking for is craft," Ray said. "You never hear about recording craftsmen. You only hear about recording artists. But I consider it more my craft than my art to be able to string together a bunch of chords, to do the actual mechanical runs among the notes, remember what fret you're on and what fret you're going to and what the next line is in the tune. And to try to make sense out of it is to me more a craft than an art, and I don't see it becoming an art for me.

"And that's the part that I want to pursue. I want to be able to put it together so that when

you hear it going from one place to the next, you go, 'oh, I've heard that before,' or 'that sounds familiar'. I want it to be accessible. I don't want it to be so oblique and out there that it's inaccessible. But at the same time, I don't necessarily want to do it in order to particularly please any certain person or group of people—another reason I never made any money doing it.

"From a craft standpoint, I've been trying—like the sculptor who carves elephants by cutting everything away from a block of stone that doesn't look like an elephant—I've been trying with these tunes to cut away everything except the essential, the Zen arrow of the tune. To me, that's a much more arduous task than adding pfru pfru or putting embellishment on it. I've been trying to get to the direct blues line.

"I'd like to get down to one note eventually, or I'd like to get to no notes. That would be the ultimate. Just stand up there and go 'Kid Man,' announce the tune 'Kid Man'," Ray said, laughing, "and then announce the next one, and everybody heard it. That's what I'm looking for. I don't know if I'll ever get there." ■

Dave Ray Disc List:

- "Blues Rags and Hollers"—Koerner, Ray & Glover (Elektra 240)
- "Lots More Blues Rags and Hollers"—KR&G (Elektra 267, 7267)
- "1964 Newport Folk Festival, Vol. 3"—KR&G, various artists (Vanguard 9186)
- "The Blues Project"—anthology with various artists (Elektra)
- "Snaker's Here"—first solo LP (Elektra 284, 7284)
- "The Return of Koerner Ray & Glover"—(Elektra 305, 7305)

- "Bamboo"—Dave Ray, Will Donicht & Others (Elektra 74048)
- "Fine Soft Land"—Dave Ray (Elektra 7319)
- "Good Old Koerner, Ray & Glover"—recorded at the St. Olaf Folk Festivals, 1963-64; released 1972 (Mill City Records 172)
- "Kid Man"—Dave Ray (Mountain Railroad Records 53780)
- "Legends In Their Spare Time"—Dave Ray Tony Glover (Treehouse)
- "Mattie Mae" and "I've Been Watching You"—Ray & Glover (45)

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3 JAN.....**STEVE HASKIN** will start off the new year with an evening of contemporary steel string guitar music at the New Riverside Cafe. 7 pm.

4 JAN.....**JOAN GRIFFITH**, guitar with **MELISSA STOUTT**, flute, will be at the New Riverside Cafe. 7 pm.

6 JAN.....**JOHN ROTH** will play selections from new album "Winter Dreams" in concert at the Janet Wallace Fine Arts Center at Macalester College. For tickets & info call 696-6382. 8 pm.

6 JAN.....**DOC WATSON** in concert at the World Theater. Last year was supposed to be his "Farewell Tour," so what this is called—I don't know. But it will be a fine night of flat-

pickin' by the master. For tickets call: 298-1300. 8 pm.

11 JAN.....Classical guitarist **ALAN JOHNSTON** will perform Michael Tippett's sonata, "The Blue Guitar" for guitar on "Live from Landmark." You can listen on MPR or hear it for free at the Landmark Center Aud. in St. Paul. 1 pm.

13 JAN.....Classical guitarist **NICK RATHS** will be one of four performers to be presented by the Schubert Club as part of their Metropolitan Artist series at House of Hope on Summit Av. in St. Paul. 3:30 pm.

13 JAN.....**DANIEL STURM**, guitarist, and **KATHY KIENZLE**, harp, solos & duets made possible by the Music in the Parks Series at the St. Anthony Park United Church of Christ. Call for tickets: 644-8152. 3 pm.

17 JAN.....**STEVE HASKIN** will give a free noontime concert at the St. Paul Student Center.

18 JAN.....The **MINNEAPOLIS GUITAR QUARTET** will perform at Temple Israel for the 'Thursday Musical.' 10:30 am.

19 & 20 JAN...Classical guitarist **CHRISTOPHER PARKENING** will perform Rodrigo's "Fantasia para un gentilhombre" with the St. Paul chamber Orchestra and several solo works for guitar by Sanz, Albeniz & Tarrega at the Ordway. Ticket prices are \$24, \$20, \$14 & \$10 and are going fast. Call 224-4222 for tickets. 8 pm.

21 JAN.....**PARKENING** & the SPCO will repeat this same program (see Jan. 19 & 20) at Orchestra Hall. Tickets are \$19, \$14 & \$10. You can't get tickets from OH, they're being sold through the Ordway, 224-4222. 2 pm.

28 JAN.....**GUITAR FORUM** presented by the MN Guitar Society. This forum will present music of the 20th century for solo guitar and

CONTINUED next page.

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guitar quartet, all of it performed with style by members of the Mpls. Guitar Quartet and the whole affair designed to end in plenty of time before the Superbowl starts. Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church, Art Room, Mpls. 1:30 pm.

31 JAN......Guitarist **JOAN GRIFFITH** will give a free noontime concert at the St. Paul Student Center.

31 JAN......**SCOTT DAVIES** and flamenco friends at the New Riverside Cafe. Just the thing to heat up a cold winter's night. 7 pm.

31 JAN......Contemporary steel string guitar music from **STEVE HASKIN** in a lunchtime concert at Town Square, downtown St. Paul. FREE, Noon.

1 FEB......**CATHY NIXON**, singer/songwriter at the New Riverside Cafe. 7 pm.

2 FEB......**JOAN GRIFFITH** at Town Square for those of you who missed her 1/31 noontime gig in favor of Steve Haskin. FREE, 11:45 am.

2 FEB......1986 Autoharp Champ **KAREN MUELLER** in an evening of contemporary acoustic music at the New Riverside Cafe. 7 pm.

7 FEB......**STEVE HASKIN** will join chromatic harmonica player **CLINT HOOVER** to play Latin American music from Cuba, Brazil and parts south. FREE at the St. Paul Student Center, noon.

7 FEB......That noontime guitarist. **STEVE HASKIN**, ventures out after dark to hold court at the New Riverside Cafe and regale patrons with his guitar stylings. 7 pm.

8 FEB......Composer/guitarist **DANIEL STURM** will give the local premiere of his "Meditations" for guitar & oboe with oboist **BOBBY TAYLOR** on "Live from Landmark." If you promise not to cough, you can sit in the audience for free or stay at home with your cold and some tea and listen to the radio broadcast on MPR. 1 pm.

11 FEB......**KAREN MUELLER** at the West Bank School of Music Coffee-house.

19 FEB......**JOAN GRIFFITH** in a faculty recital at O'Shaughnessy Auditorium on the campus of St. Cate's. This should be a real interesting program. Solo classical guitar and guitar with a jazz quartet recreating the sound of the Modern Jazz Quartet with Laurindo Almeida.


19 FEB......Classical guitarist **JEFFREY VAN** with the Hill House Chamber Players. Mr. Van will play chamber music with guitar by Vivaldi, Ponce & Nin on 19th & 20th century guitars. At the Hill House, Summit Av., St. Paul. Ticket are \$8. Call 297-2555, 7 pm.

26 FEB......A repeat of the Feb. 19 Hill House performance, one week later, for all those who couldn't get a ticket for the first one. 7:30 pm.

25 FEB......**GUITAR FORUM** presented by the MN Guitar Society in the Art Room at the Henn. Av. United Methodist Church. This month's forum will look at period instruments. **PHIL RUKAVINA** on lute and **JEFFREY VAN** on a copy of a 19th century guitar. 7 pm.

17 FEB......**SPAIN'S JEWS & GYPSIES** is the title of a program jointly presented by the Ordway Music

CONTINUED next page.



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CONTINUED from previous page.

Theatre & the MN Guitar Society. 8 pm.

18 FEB..... VOICES OF THE SEPHARAD performs music of Europe's Sephardic Jews in the Spanish-derived "Ladino" language. **RINCON DEL FLAMENCO** will perform old and new examples of gypsy flamenco. The concert will take place in the McKnight Theatre located in the Ordway. Tickets are \$10 or \$8 to members of the MN Guitar Society & MN Dance Alliance. Call 224-4222 for tickets. 8 pm.

3 MAR..... CATHY NIXON, singer/songwriter at St. Martin's Table.

ON-GOING EVENTS

Every Thursday night at the Artist Quarter—**BLUES DELUXE** will play the blues for you. Tuesday nights at the Dakota—**PAT DONOHUE** will perform every night except 1/23. **TONY & MICHAEL HAUSER** will be out on tour during the month of January but will head back to Fuji-Ya in February for their usual Friday & Saturday night gigs.

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PLAN AHEAD....

Classical guitarist **JULIAN BREM** will be at the Ordway Sunday afternoon, March 25, and **ANGEL ROMERO** will play with the MN Orchestra the 1st week in April. Sure, these events are in the distant future, but for some strange reason the tickets are on sale now, and they're selling all the good seats first!!!

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THE PERSONAL TOUCH.



Stepan Rak at U of Western Ontario

BGS Music Promotions and the University of Western Ontario are proud to announce the appointment of Stepan Rak, Czechoslovakia's renowned composer/guitarist, as artist-in-residence for the spring of 1990.

Mr. Rak, one of the most creative and innovative figures in the guitar world today, will be lecturing on his own music, conducting master classes and seminars on his unique technical contributions to the guitar, as well as performing concerts in the United States and Canada. During his stay at U of WO in London, Ontario, Mr. Rak will oversee the premiere performance of his newest guitar concerto. The work will be performed by Alan Torok, for whom it is being written, and a faculty ensemble conducted by James McKay.

Rak's residency at U of WO reflects the support the guitar enjoys at this university. It was only six years ago that the guitar was dropped from the music program there, only to be reinstated a year later, after a public outcry from guitarists in different parts of the province encouraged a change of heart. Since Alan Torok's appointment there as Lecturer in Guitar in 1986, the program has expanded every year; this year there is a record enrollment of 19 guitar students working towards undergraduate and graduate degrees. ■

MUELLER from page 3.

cluding healing songs such as "Affirmation Song" and social consciousness songs such as "Women in History." Karen played with Jennifer in December at the Heart of the Beast Puppet Theater.

Karen herself plays a variety of styles ranging from traditional tunes on her autoharp to more contemporary songs and instrumentals on her guitar. She's recently been experimenting with different tuning methods like DADGAD, which make the guitar seem more like an autoharp with its more modal, open chord sound. Some musicians who have influenced her work include Bryan Bowers, Bonnie Phipps, Claudia Schmidt, Nancy Griffith, Michael Hedges and John McCutcheon.

One evening last November at the New Riverside Cafe, where you can see her every other month, Karen pleased her audience with much good music, including a couple of songs on her guitar, "Millworker" and "Testimony" and a couple guitar instrumentals: "Whiskey Before Breakfast," a flat-pick solo, and "The Tofu Song," another flat-pick solo which she had composed that day over dinner. And of course—she dazzled us with her autoharp as she will no doubt continue to do. ■

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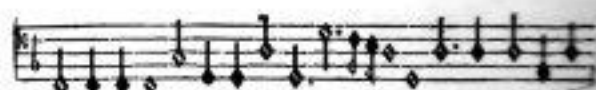
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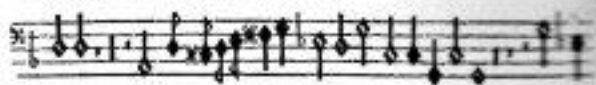
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