

# Guitarist

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## Sundin Hall Concerts Continue: a recital and a guitarathon



**Ricardo Iznaola**

Saturday, January 22, 8 PM  
Sundin Hall

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# Society News & Notes

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## Call for Classical Guitarathon Performers

The theme of the next **Classical Guitarathon** on May 28th will be "new talent", with a focus on performers who have never appeared on the Classical Guitarathon stage. Depending on how many artists offer their skills, we may also consider performers who have performed only once before. Anyone who wishes to be part of this exciting concert please send a note and demo tape or demo CD by March 1, 2005 to:

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# Interview with Iznaola

by Kuan Teoh

**Kuan:** Thank you for taking the time to do this interview. You took an interesting path. Tell us about who you studied with and how you've evolved.

**Ricardo Iznaola:** My guitar ancestry evolved in this way. I studied in Venezuela first with Manuel Enrique Perez Diaz at the conservatory in Caracas. He was a disciple of Manuel Luiza Anido, the great Argentinean guitarist who was a disciple of Miguel Llobet in Argentina, so there is that lineage on that side. When Alirio Diaz began to teach in Venezuela in the mid 60's, I enrolled his summer courses. He gave a series of courses for three months, and I attended several courses. You see, I studied with Alirio as well, an outstanding Segovia disciple. Upon completion of my studies in Venezuela I then went to study with Sainz de la Maza in Madrid. Sainz de la Maza had been a student of Daniel Fortea, who was a Tarrega student—so I have lineage connecting me to Tarrega as well.

**K:** Of all your teachers, who influenced you the most.

**R:** Sainz de la Maza, because he was a radical change for me at that point in time. Until then my development as a player had been very orthodox in the Tarrega tradition. Sainz de la Maza came from that tradition also but he had evolved beyond, and I think from the influence Miguel Llobet had on him, he had developed a new awareness of a more relaxed technique, more ergonomic I would say, more modern technique. And so I began to think in terms of that issue, which, until that point, had not been of concern to me, which was how to make a technique efficient, effective, and efficient in terms of getting the job done, and getting the job done in the most economical way.

**K:** What about music?

**R:** Musically, all three had great influence. Alirio Diaz was very important in my development because of the importance he gave to the performance act. In other words I learned a lot from Alirio about how to be a performer, how you present yourself to an audience, how you present the music to an audience. What is the real problem in projecting sound to a hall, is very different from hearing yourself in a practice room. So I learned a lot about the art of performing from Alirio. I learned a lot about preparation and discipline from my first teacher Perez Diaz and I learned a lot about issues of phrasing, rhythm, interpretation from Sainz de la Maza, Regino. Eduardo was a composer primarily, although he did teach a lot and he did perform, but to a much lesser extent than Regino, who of course had a very distinguished career, especially after Rodrigo wrote the *Concierto de Aranjuez* for him.

**K:** I was going to ask you about the *Concierto de Aranjuez*. Why for Regino?

**R:** Well because he was a very close friend! At that point, Segovia was out of Spain most of the time, Rodrigo was in Paris prior to '39 but he visited frequently and whenever he went he would visit with SDLM. And SDLM had been asking him for a concerto for some years and then in the late 30's when Rodrigo finally decided to come back to Spain for good, he actually brought back some sketches of the concerto with him and then they worked together on that

piece which was premiered in 1940.

**K:** How did your teachers influence you as a teacher?

**R:** My teaching methods are not a direct continuation from them because I redesigned my approach after finishing my guitar studies. I tell my students that part of the art of keeping alive as a performer, as an artist these days, is the art of redesigning yourself. If not, you become dogmatic, and you become set on a certain way of doing things in which you stop questioning—and the moment you stop questioning, you are doomed as an artist. I've consciously tried to grow beyond the foundation that I got from my teachers. In other words, how do I make the instrument and my body one system, that works in collaboration rather than in opposition. My main concern as a pedagogue has always been to make the work of the body as organic as possible, in terms of the possibilities that the instrument can give you... for musical expression.

**K:** Where do you think the classical guitar is headed?

**R:** Where it is now is good. The 20th century was really the golden age of classical guitar, in my opinion, and of course the 21st may surpass it, it's just too early to tell. However, in the 1900's the guitar became a mature musical medium, such that professional composers paid attention to this and wrote great works for the guitar. Two important things happened. First, the pioneering work of the old masters, such as Segovia, who had a very significant music written for him. Second, the "new" generation of players, such as Julian Bream, Alirio Diaz, or Narcisso Yepes, continued that mission, and who were now able to play a modern repertoire. Now composers write for guitar even though there's no direct association with one particular performer, because they have discovered the possibilities of the instruments. It is true most composers are at first frightened by the guitar because they may not know much about it. This instrument is not studied in orchestration class, obviously because it's not an orchestral instrument. So composers have to get an education through their own curiosity or their own partnership with a player, or a variety of methods. Now we have a very important repertoire, that was created in the 20th century, that is now a foundation for further development.

On the other side I see a great deal of advancement in the teaching of guitar, in the actual pedagogy of the instrument. There is a concern with making sure the technique is organic, sound, from a physiological standpoint. However a certain problem can be found finding correct solutions, the tendency to dogmatize them. And so you find, especially in some younger players, a certain, how would I say, a certain homogeneity. They tend to sound the same in many cases because they are so cautious about doing well and doing it correctly. So I think the next stage will be flexibility. It will be a stage of development in which all of this new information which is coming into the methods and pedagogy will be assimilated as it has been, for instance, for string playing or piano playing— then true personality will come out of it,

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because people will know how to handle themselves well physically, without losing their individuality. So that's the only negative thing I can point out, that right now we are in a transitional stage because we have so many new sources of information of what is correct technique. Everyone has to sound a little the same.

**K:** Could you tell us the story of the Jose *Sonata*?

**R:** Well that was a fascinating story because I came to know the piece in sheer serendipity. I was visiting with Sainz de la Maza, this was in the last years of my contacts with him on a regular basis, because I left the country in 1978, I'm speaking of Spain of course. I don't exactly remember the date but I know it was either late '77 or early '78. We were looking for something in his archives, and while browsing through his music (he had a vast collection of music, he had a whole wall of cabinets) he said, "Oh, you might be interested in this." And he hands me a manuscript, a very lovely manuscript, landscape manuscript — "Sonata, Antonio Jose." Then he tells me very briefly that this was a very young composer that was "my friend from Burgos like me, he died at the beginning of the civil war, look at it and see what you think." So I took the manuscript with me, took it home, and forgot about it. And about two or three weeks later I made a photocopy, and I think it was a couple of months or so later, I returned to see Regino and said, "Oh by the way, here's your manuscript." He had forgotten that he had given it to me, so that is where my sense of honesty conflicted with my artistic ego. I wondered if I had not brought back the manuscript if he would not have remembered it. But in any case, I began to read the piece and I said, "Wow man, this is a major piece!" And so I began to work on it. and because I did not know anything about that generation of composers I began to explore a little bit and I saw that there was a lot of music written by other contemporaries of Sainz de la Maza and Antonio Jose like Julian Bautista, the Halffter brothers, Rosa Garcia Ascot, I mean a whole repertoire! And so I began to gather all of this music and I began to prepare Jose *Sonata*, and eventually in '81 I gave its first performance, in Madrid. I also performed the other works I mentioned, that up to now, had been unknown in the guitar world. Unfortunately by that time Sainz de la Maza was very ill. He heard the concert on the radio, a live broadcast in Madrid, but he could not attend the concert. He died in November of '81. So he could not see the coming to, the blossoming, into public awareness of the Jose *Sonata*. Now interestingly enough, in 1990, I issued the first recording of the *Sonata* on a CD called the *Dream of Icarus*. That same year, Berben, an Italian publisher, got their hands on a draft manuscript which Jose had left in his house, in Burgos. It had been in the possession of his nephew. The nephew had done what was customary at the time, once the definitive manuscript was complete, he sent it to Sainz de la Maza. And so his relatives didn't know there existed another manuscript, which was the one I had. Berben brought out the first edition of the *Sonata* based on the draft they had, and it was full of erasures and scratches, you know, writing all

over, so it was obviously a draft. Then I published an article in mid 90's comparing that manuscript with the one I knew. Angelo Gilardino, of Berben, found out about this and we began to talk. I said "Lets do another edition," and so we brought out a second edition with Berben, based on the most recent manuscript that Jose wrote, which was the one Sainz de la Maza had. It had about 19-20 differences from the draft. That was basically how it came to be in a published form. And of course it has been acknowledged one of the major pieces of the 20th century with many performers performing it. It was an extraordinary thing.

**K:** Let's step back in time a bit. Can you tell us a little bit about Antonio Lauro and his relationship with Alirio Diaz?

**R:** Lauro was another great influence in my development. I was not a student directly but I did make it a point to work with him on his works. When I was studying in Spain, every time I went home to Venezuela, where my family and I lived since the early 60's when we left Cuba, I would make it a point to visit with Lauro and chat about his music, and play for him whatever it was I was working on. The short of it is that by the time that I came to the States, which was 1980, I had recorded most of Lauro's solo output. I recorded, I think all of the waltzes, the suite, the sonata, the *Seis por Derecho*, the *Variations on a Children's Song*, and many of his arrangements. He did a set of lovely arrangements of Venezuelan popular music. I had an extraordinary admiration for him. He was an extraordinary man, not only an extraordinary musician but an extraordinary man. Very wise, he gave me very good advice about my career. He knew that I was interested in composing, so when I played for him my variations on a theme by him, he was very encouraging. I consider that my first publishable piece in a way because it well crafted. He was a very important person in my development as a young artist, as he had been of course with Alirio Diaz much earlier, and of course he was much more of a contemporary of Alirio. They were friends from youth and Alirio did an extraordinary amount of work to advocate for Lauro's work internationally. He brought the first editions of Lauro's music in Europe to Broekmans and Van Poppel, the Dutch publisher, and played Lauro in almost every concert, the thing I have done and continue to do to this day.

**K:** When you mention that you wanted to compose, tell us about your compositions. Do you compose on the guitar or without the guitar?

**R:** I usually try to write outside of the guitar. In that sense I believe in Hindemith's discipline. He forbid his students to write on the piano or any other instrument. Not that I take that to any dogmatic extreme, because I do try out my ideas on the instrument, and of course the instrument gives you back ideas as well. I think it's very important to have your musical ideas in abstract form because when you are a performer, it's very easy to let the fingers compose for you and that can be very dangerous. So I've tried to make my compositions music-in-the-abstract first, then I make an

# Jazz Guitarathon

MGS AUDIENCES HAVE BEEN FORTUNATE to hear great music performed by high-caliber guitarists at the annual fund-raising Guitarathons. Minneapolis continues to enjoy the reputation of being home to many great guitarists and this year's Jazz Guitarathon will demonstrate that this reputation is well deserved. The line-up will include a wide range of performers. The 2004 Jazz Guitarathon, scheduled for Saturday, February 19 at 8:00 pm, will present a wonderful selection of guitarists performing an amazing and diverse program.



A composer, author, recording artist, musical director, and exceptional live performer – **Bill Banfield** is the complete package, and bridges many worlds. Banfield is steeped in both classical and jazz traditions. A scholar and live performer, he is engaging, comfortable and in command with the pen, as a media commentator, in front of a classroom, and on stage.

The 43 year old guitarist-composer and scholar resists the trappings of precise categorization. Banfield is an endowed chair in Arts and Humanities, associate professor of music and director of American Cultural Studies, Jazz American Popular World music studies at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, MN. Banfield was recently appointed as contributing editor of Cultural Studies for Scarecrow Press. Banfield received his bachelor of music (guitar, jazz studies) from the New England Conservatory of Music, Master of Theological Studies, Boston University and a doctorate in Composition from the University of Michigan. In 2001 on invitation from Henry Louis Gates served as a W.E.B. Dubois fellow at Harvard University, and 2002 was invited by Toni Morrison to be the visiting Princeton Atelier artist. He completed that year an opera on the life of 19th century sculptress Edmonia Lewis with collaboration and text by poet Yusef Komunyakha.



**Joel Shapira** is a top performing classical and jazz guitarist based in the Twin Cities. His educational background includes studies with some of the world's great players and teachers including jazz legends Joe Pass and Tal Farlow. A native of St. Paul, he attended Berklee School of Music in Boston and The Mannes

School of Music in New York City where he lived, performed and taught for eight years.

Joel performs extensively in the Twin Cities area and beyond in a wide variety of musical settings including clubs, restaurants, private events, regional arts festivals and more. Sunset Park Music, the music business he founded in 1994, provides both jazz and classical music for weddings and private events.

Joel plays in duo formats with some of the area's finest musicians and singers including flutist/saxophonist Paul Harper, vocalists Charmin Michelle and Signe Hensel and

pianist Larry McDonough

As a member of the highly regarded jazz trio Triplicate, Joel performs original compositions and standards at major venues including The Dakota, The Artists' Quarter, Café Luxx and more with fellow band members percussionist Dave Stanoch and bassist Bruce "Pooch" Heine.



**Reuben Ristrom's** several decades of experience include night clubs, jazz festivals, concerts, shows, recording sessions, strolling ensembles, solo guitar or banjo, wedding music, funerals (incl. Jazz funerals) leading sing-alongs and more...

His styles include: Dixieland, mainstream jazz, swing, standards, latin, as well as a dose of vintage rock 'n roll.

A Twin Cities native and U of M graduate with 40 years in the music business, Reuben has worked concerts, shows and jazz festivals throughout the continental US and Hawaii, gigging with the best local musicians and many national 'name' artists.



For **Steve Blons**, jazz was just the music he heard his father play.

Starting on piano, Steve was given a ukulele at age 10 and switched to guitar at age 13. He had a few lessons, but mostly he learned by listening, imitating and using his ear to figure out tunes on the job. Steve played his first gigs when he was 16.

He learned the Dixieland jazz repertoire playing with his dad, Harry Blons. For the next 35 years other career pursuits (teaching and counseling, mostly) kept his music avocational.

Until 1994. That's when Steve decided to make his living exclusively as a musician. These days he combines freelance jobbing with private teaching and a weekly church gig. He is part of the trio, Soul Café, who combine jazz and poetry in their performances. Steve can also be heard weekly on KBEM-FM on *Jazz and the Spirit*, a program he co-hosts and co-produces. It explores the spiritual side of jazz.

Steve plays a 1939 Gibson L-5 he has owned since 1981. His heroes on guitar are Barney Kessel, Joe Pass and Jim Hall. Steve is joined by vibraphonist, Steve Yeager, in a duo created especially for this performance.



**Christopher Olson** earned a master's degree in jazz studies/performance from the University of North Texas in 1995. He holds a bachelor's degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point in jazz studies and music education/choral emphasis. He has been the guitar

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professor at UW-Stevens Point, the Wausau Conservatory of Music, and Inver Hills Community College, and has taught courses in jazz history and improvisation at UW-Marathon County. Chris currently teaches in the guitar and music theory at MusicTech College in St. Paul, and he also teaches guitar lessons and conducts jazz combos at MacPhail Center for music. In addition, he is also an instructor at the Indianhead Arts Center summer jazz camp in Shell Lake, Wisconsin. Chris performs as a soloist and with groups of all sizes and musical styles. He has played with such jazz artists as Bob Mintzer, Louis Bellson, and Terry Gibbs.



Reynold Philipsek will be joined by Robert Bell. Philipsek has a new gypsy jazz guitar release titled *Grey Chalet*. For more information contact Reynold at: <[www.reynold.com](http://www.reynold.com)>.

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adaptation for the guitar. In that way, my compositional process is similar to my transcription process. I create the piece in a way, and then transcribe it for the guitar, so to speak.

**K:** Do you have guitar in mind when you compose?

**R:** Yeah, but not necessarily always. My models are always the orchestra and the human voice, so I try to write for those media that I consider to be kind of melodlic, because the orchestra gives you a palette, of not only registers but also colors, that, for the guitar is very important. So in the back of my mind I might have the guitar, but what I really have in mind is orchestral colors and textures, and, in terms of linear development of the human voice. I am a firm believer in music that is singable.

**K:** When you say singable, do you mean just in terms of the register or melodically?

**R:** Exactly, more in terms of an idealized vocal design that is not necessarily singable in physical reality but singable in the quality of design. The freedom that I have found myself with as a composer is that, in opposition to composers who are professional composers (I don't live off my compositions and I don't live off my commissions) I write the music that I want to hear. I don't write music that is fashionable or marketable or something like that.

**K:** Or shocking?

**R:** Or shocking, or novel, exactly like that. None of those concerns, and that gives me enormous aesthetic freedom to write the music that I like to write, rather than the music that I think I should be writing, you see. So it's an ideal combination really I have found, because I was trained as a composer, that's what I studied in Madrid when I went to study with Sainz de la Maza at the Conservatoire. But I, in a way, always had composition as a tool for my musicianship rather than as a final goal of my musicianship.

**K:** You've written quite a few books. What motivates you to do that?

**R:** My interest in music is not only as a performer and as a composer but as an intellectual as well. I've always, and this is way back since I was starting my first steps in music, I have been fascinated by the problems of music from a psychological, pedagogical, aesthetic standpoint. So I have always had this attraction to that contact with the musical phenomenon that is behind the scenes, so to speak. What happens when you are teaching a student for instance, how to play expressively. It's a fascinating intellectual problem that is not only telling him oh, you must do a *piano* here and a *crescendo* here, do *metallico* sound here, no, that is just scratching the surface, and frankly, I despise that. I never teach like that. I find it fascinating where the source is that you have to tap, to be able to play a *piano* here, a *crescendo* here, or a *metallico* here... where does that come from? And that is what fascinates me about that issue of the psychological foundations of performance and the pedagogical implications that come out of that.

**K:** You've also written quite a bit on technical aspects of guitar playing.

**R:** Right, yeah. That is the other fascination which comes back to this issue of ergonomics. What is an appropriate technique for the task at hand. How do you handle your hands on the fretboard, on the strings, to achieve your task effectively and efficiently. And so I even wrote a book on the physiology of playing which I am very pleased to see is being very well received. It's a very introductory text designed with the teacher in mind so I did not go into much depth about the actual scientific foundation because it would be totally useless for the teacher. But it is sufficiently deep to be instructive to teachers about how this mechanism, this phenomenal mechanism of the human body works in the context of an instrument like the guitar. And that, I try to keep updating myself, because we, in fact are just beginning to know, what we should know about the issue of the ergonomics of guitar playing.

**K:** It would seem that guitarists would find it rather difficult to self diagnose their playing.

**R:** It is a very difficult issue and that's why good teachers are necessary. You can you learn a lot on your own, and I am actually an advocate of self teaching... because I was self taught for five years. I learned many important things, and many wrong things. The wrong things of course become habits and then they are very difficult to correct, you have to spend a lot of time then in that therapeutic state. But then the advantages of self teaching really proves your motivational capacity which is something we all need if we want to survive in the arts. You have to have this motivation, this internal fire, going on all the time, or else you won't survive as an artist. So for me, a period of self teaching is very important for young people to try out to see if they love this thing enough to spend a life pursuing it. It has its dangers of course, but then you will learn a lot of wrong things, but it has that psychological virtue of making sure you are doing what you need to be doing.

**K:** Do you look outside of our classical guitar world?

**R:** Oh absolutely, continuously. Actually you might have

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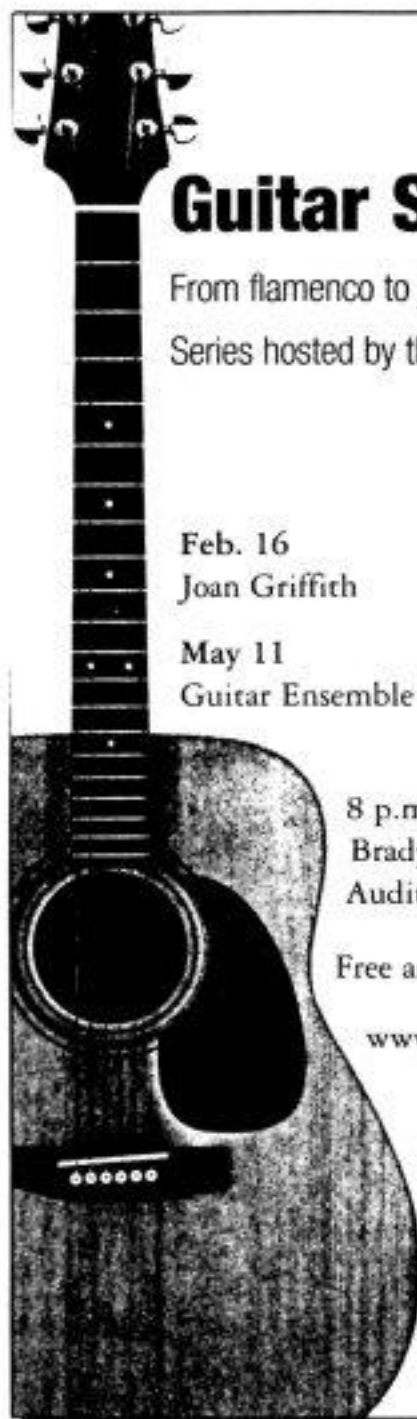
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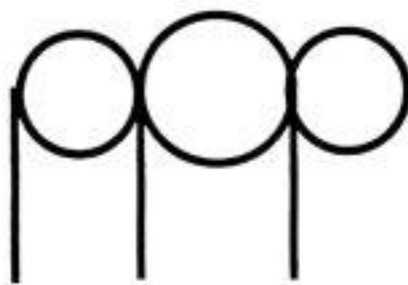
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## Paul Hintz

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Fri. Jan. 7, 8 pm, Dunn Bros. Freighthouse, 3rd Ave., Mpls.

Sat., Jan. 8, 7 pm, Dunn Bros. in Richfield,  
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Fri., Jan. 14, 7 pm, Dunn Bros. in White Bear Lake,  
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Sat., Jan. 15, 7:30 pm, Dunn Bros. in Vadnais Heights,  
Cty. Rd. E, just west of Hwy. 35.

Fri., Jan. 21, 8 pm, The Sugar Room on Walnut St. Mankato.

Sat., Jan. 22, 7:30 pm, Dunn Bros., Andover,  
in the Festival Foods on Bunker Lake Blvd.

Fri., Jan. 28, 7:30-9:30 pm, Dunn Bros., Stillwater

Sat Jan 29, 6 pm, Black's Ford Restaurant,  
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Sun., Feb. 6, 10 am, Dunn Bros. on Grand Ave., St Paul.

## Jeff Lambert

Sun., Jan. 9, 10 am, Dunn Bros. Grand Ave., St. Paul.

Sun., Jan. 16, 10 am, Dunn Bros. Grand Ave., St. Paul.

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gathered that my context is not guitaristic. In other words, I consider the guitar an incident in my musical career. It should not be taken out of context, it is an incident that I live for, you see. But it is an incident. I could have been a musician in any other medium, actually for a while I considered conducting, and I did some conducting earlier on, but by that time I already had a career as a guitarist. But what fascinates me about the guitar is that it's a limited instrument which has secret treasures hidden in it that you can bring out and create magical moments for a listener. To a degree, that I believe that it is greater than any other instrument. And it's precisely its limitations that provide you with the opportunity. Someone said that there is no great art without limitations, because in the limits is where you find the imagination. You have to become creative to work within these limits and still find something that is really special. But you're right, I consider myself a musician who plays the guitar, but not necessarily a guitarist by definition.

**K:** If there was one basic principle that you could instill in a guitarist, or a musician, or a person, what would it be?

**R:** I would say without hesitation, forget the myth of talent. Don't define yourself by what other people tell you regarding your talent. Not only because it can be very self destructive, but because scientifically we're beginning to see, that it is indeed a myth. Everyone has capabilities to develop musical ability, linguistic ability, scientific ability, physical ability, if you learn to tap early enough into those resources. For me the great problem is that when we begin to be social beings, early in our infancy, adults and others

around us begin to tell us what we are. Sometimes they do so with the best of intentions. They tell us, "Oh, I think you're better than this or that," for instance. "Oh, rather than taking piano lessons why don't you get onto the tennis team," or things like that. And in a young mind, a child's mind, these statements become articles of faith, because a child believes authority and adulthood. We then become predestined to become what our social environment has been telling since we were very very young. Then when we become autonomous adults, we have created this self image which in part is inherited from these early experiences. And I know as a teacher, I've been teaching now for 35 years, that a lot of these self perceptions are the boundaries past which no one dares to go. You believe you're not talented, and you are not talented. You become not talented because of that. So that will be my advice. Forget that, and let your passion tell you what to do, because if you have that passion you will be able to do it. That I think is not exclusively related to music making, it's related to life. I don't believe those limitations that we inherit because of the socialization process.

See Ricardo's website at: <<http://www.du.edu/~riznaola/>>

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