



# Guitarist

The Minnesota Guitar Society • PO Box 14986 / Minneapolis MN 55414 • Vol. 37 No. 4 / Winter Issue 2021–22

## Minnesota Guitar Society Mission Statement

Promote the guitar in all its stylistic and cultural diversity through sponsorship of public forums, concerts, and workshops. Serve as an educational and social link between the community and amateur and professional guitarists of all ages.

## Music to Warm the Heart All Winter Long



**Henry Johnston  
on December 11**



**Aniello Desiderio  
on January 29**

**Each Concert Will Be In Person  
at Sundin Music Hall.**

7:30 pm start, 7 pm box office opens. Advance tickets recommended and available at our website.

The concert by Henry Johnston will be recorded, and uploaded to our YouTube channel the next day, available for viewing until December 18th.

### Later This Season at Sundin

March 26 Grisha Goryachev  
April 30 Kupiński Guitar Duo  
June 4 Classical Guitarathon



**Berta Rojas  
on February 26**

**IN THIS ISSUE. . .** Concert information, pages 2 to 4;  
Benefit Workshop for GIOS, and more, page 5; Guitar Education, pages 6 & 7

## December 11, Henry Johnston

For the first of our three heart-warming, soul-stirring concerts during the winter months, we are proud to feature the return of a true home-town favorite, St. Paul native Henry Johnston.

Born in 1997, Henry began studying guitar at age 6 with his father, the widely known classical guitarist and teacher Alan Johnston. From a very young age, Henry enjoyed success in international competitions. At age 12, he won second place in the 2009 Guitar Foundation of America's International Guitar Competition, competing in the junior division. At age 14, he performed at the Fitzgerald Theatre in St. Paul as one of five winners of MN Varsity, Minnesota Public Radio's 1st annual competition for young classical singers and instrumentalists. In the same month, he became the youngest guitarist ever to win first prize in the Schubert Club Competition, competing against guitarists nearly twice his age. In 2013, Henry was a prizewinner in the senior division of the Guitar Foundation of America International Competition and in September of that year he appeared on NPR's *From the Top*. While in high school, he was the sole private student of the late classical guitar master John Holmquist.

In the fall of 2015, Henry moved to Paris to study with French guitarist Judicaël Perroy and enrolled at the Conservatoire de Musique et de Danse in Aulnay-sous-Bois. In 2016, he returned to the US to pursue a bachelor's degree in classical guitar performance at the University of Texas at Austin, studying under Adam Holzman. That October, he won first prize in the Texas A&M International Guitar Competition. Since then, he has won prizes in numerous international competitions and has performed throughout the US and Europe. In April 2018, he was selected by the University of Texas System Board of Regents as a recipient of the Board of Regents' Outstanding Student Award in Arts and Humanities. In November of 2019, Henry appeared on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* on NBC.

Henry now lives in New York City, while pursuing a master's degree at The Juilliard School and studying under Sharon Isbin.

## Henry Johnston Program

Mazurka, Op. 68, No. 2 in A minor by Frédéric Chopin (1810–49) (arr. Henry Johnston)

*Homenaje* by Manuel de Falla (1876–1946)

Sarabande by Francis Poulenc (1899–1963)

*Cuna* by Federico Mompou (1893–1987)

Chaconne in G minor (HWV 435) by George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

*Zarabanda Lejana* by Joaquín Rodrigo (1901–99)

*Variations sur "Folia de España" et Fugue* by Manuel Ponce (1882–1948)

## January 29, Aniello Desiderio

In January, we will be delighted to welcome the sensational Italian guitarist Aniello Desiderio to our series for a long overdue Minnesota debut. At age 8, Desiderio performed in public for the first time, displaying such outstanding gifts that music critics started to speak of him as an "enfant prodige," "wunderkind," "a genius," "the Orpheus of the guitar," "a guitarist of the century," and "il Fenomeno."

He has won 18 awards in national and international competitions, including 1st Prize and Special Prize for the best interpretation of South American music at the International Guitar Competition in Havana (1988); "Neapolitan of the Year" Award, Italy (1988); 1st Prize and Special Prize for the best interpretation of Tarrega's music at the International Francisco Tarrega Competition, Benicasim, Spain (1992); and 1st Prize at the International "Guerrero" Competition, Madrid (1995).

He performs as a recitalist and soloist with orchestras in both North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa at the most important venues around the world, including Carnegie Hall, Palau de La Musica, Munich Philharmonie, Alte Oper, Tonhalle, Teatro delle Palme, Radio France, Istanbul Philharmonie, Berlin Philharmonie, and Opera House Wien.

2021-22 season continued on page 3

### Board of Directors

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Desiderio has performed with important orchestras and ensembles throughout Europe and at some of the most prestigious music festivals in the world.

In 1999, German Television BR/ARD produced a film and portrait of Desiderio in Naples that was broadcast throughout Europe. Also, he received the “Artist in Residence Award 1999” from German Radio DLF and the Musikfest Bremen together with Gidon Kremer. He was invited to the 70th Birthday Gala of Maestro Lorin Maazel by Bavarian Radio and Television. Together with his brothers Gennaro and Gaetano and other famous Neapolitan musicians, he founded the group *Passione Napoletana*, performing the highly emotional music of his hometown Naples: “Serenate, Tanghi, Danze, Canzoni e Tarantelle Napoletane.”

He has recorded for the Frame, Waku Music, Koch-Universal, and Accelerando Music Production labels. Since 2006, he has also recorded for his own company, Adoro Records.

In the fall of 2009, he created the recording project “Quartetto Furioso” with violinist Gennaro Desiderio, pianist Gaetano Desiderio, and percussionist Salvatore Minale, playing a program consisting of Vivaldi’s *The Four Seasons* and Piazzolla’s *Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*. He produced a CD of this project for the German label Termidor, which includes artists such as saxophonist Paquito D’Rivera and clarinetist Sabine Mayer.

In 2010, he performed the *Concerto Madrigal* by Joaquin Rodrigo with legendary classical guitarist Angel Romero. Since then, he has given summer masterclasses at the International Summer Academy Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria. Renowned guitarist John McLaughlin chose Aniello for the European premiere of his concerto *Thieves and Poets*. He is a professor at the Conservatorio Domenico Cimarosa of Avellino (Italy). In 2017, he created his latest record, *Nocturnal*, for Accelerando Music Production in Germany.

## Aniello Desiderio Program

*Suite Espanola* by Gaspar Sanz (1640–1710)

Españoletas, Gallarda y Villano, Danza de las hachas, Rujero y paradetas, Zarabanda al ayre español, Passacalle, Folias, La Miñona de Cataluña, Canarios

Chaconne from the Violin Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004 by J. S. Bach (1685–1750)

*Variations sur “Folia de España” et Fugue* by Manuel Ponce (1882–1948)

*Escarraman*, Op. 177 (mvts. I, II & IV) by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895–1968)

*The Harp & Shadows* (Homenage to Toru Takemitsu) by Leo Brouwer (b. 1937)

## February 26, Berta Rojas

We are delighted to announce the return of internationally acclaimed guitarist Berta Rojas to our series. Her concert here some years ago is still spoken of with awe by those lucky enough to have been there. Join us in February so you too can join that happy group!

Berta Rojas ranks among today’s foremost classical guitarists. She has been praised as “guitarist extraordinaire” by the *Washington Post* and an “ambassador of the classical guitar” by *Classical Guitar* magazine.

Rojas has been nominated three times for a Latin Grammy Award: Best Instrumental Album for *Día y Medio—A Day and a Half*, a duet with Paquito D’Rivera (2012); Best Classical Album for *Salsa Roja* (2014); and most recently, Best Tango Album for *History of Tango* (2015), recorded with the Camerata Bariloche.

Her warmth and musicality have earned her the admiration of audiences at major venues worldwide, including the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall and Frederick P. Rose Hall of Jazz at the Lincoln Center in New York, London’s South Bank Centre, the Kennedy Center in Washington DC, the National Concert Hall in Dublin (where

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she performed as a soloist with the Irish Radio and Television Orchestra), and the Flagey Studio 4 in Brussels, where she appeared with the Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra for Belgian National Television.

In 2011, with guest Paquito D’Rivera, Rojas initiated the four-year tour *In the Footsteps of Mangoré*, which traced the travels of Paraguayan Agustín Barrios, pioneer of the classical guitar in the Americas. The duo performed in 20 Latin American and Caribbean countries, ending at the national theater of the capital of El Salvador, final resting place of the great composer and guitarist.

Rojas takes her audiences on a colorful journey of sound, embracing new works by composers in diverse genres. That journey is echoed in recordings such as *Cielo Abierto* (2006) and *Terruño* (2009), as well as the duo with Carlos Barbosa-Lima on *Alma y Corazón* (2007) and the celebrated *Intimate Barrios* (2008). On her latest recording, *Felicidade* (2017), she pays tribute to Brazilian music with guest artists including Gilberto Gil, Toquinho, and Ivan Lins.

In addition to sharing her own artistry through international tours and master classes, Rojas is committed to furthering and disseminating the classical guitar. A particular focus is on promoting the music of her home country, Paraguay, and Latin American music.

She also is committed to providing ongoing support for the careers of young, upcoming guitarists. With this aim, she created the first online classical guitar competition, the Barrios World Wide Web Competition, in 2009, and was the Artistic Director of the Ibero-American Guitar Festival at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, DC. She also co-founded the Beatty Music Scholarship Competition for Classical Guitar for young artists, offering winners the opportunity to perform at the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

After initial studies in Paraguay with Felipe Sosa and Violeta de Mestral, Rojas studied in Uruguay under Abel Carlevaro, Eduardo Fernández, and Mario Payseé, and at the Peabody Institute in Baltimore under Manuel Barrueco, Ray Chester, and Julian Gray. She recently joined the prestigious Berklee College of Music in Boston as Associate Professor, sharing her knowledge and love of music with young guitarists from all over the world.

Berta Rojas has been ranked among the most influential women in the Hispanic world (EFE and EsGlobal; 2014, 2017). She has been named a Fellow of the Americas by the US Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts for her artistic excellence, and honored by her country with the title Illustrious Ambassador of Musical Art. In 2015, she was awarded the National Order of Merit of the Comuneros, and the title of Doctor honoris causa by two national universities. In 2017, in recognition of her outstanding contribution to culture, she received both the National Order of Merit Don José Falcón and the Carlos Colombino Award.

### Berta Rojas Program

*Segovia* by Ida Presti (1924–1967)

*Idylle pour Ida*, Op. 93, by John Duarte (1919–2004)

Prelude 1, “Tombeau,” by Gilbert Biberian (b. 1944)

*Danse Rythmique* by Ida Presti

Sonatina by Federico Moreno Torroba (1891–1982)

Allegretto, Andante, Allegro

Four Pieces by Maria Luisa Anido (1907–96)

Preludio Lejania, Aire de Vidalita, Triste No. 1, El Misachico

*Anido’s Portrait* by Sergio Assad (b. 1952)

I–Chacarera, II–Zapateado, III–Aire de Kalinka, IV–Aire de Salsa

### Our In-Person STAY SAFE Plan

**Everyone is required to wear a mask.**

**Everyone (any age) is required** to show proof of either full COVID-19 vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test result taken within the previous 72 hours.

**We will practice social distancing.** The box office and the doors to the hall itself will open at 7:00 pm, 30 minutes before the concert. To facilitate distancing and limit audience size to 50% capacity, tickets will be for assigned seats.

Please purchase tickets online in advance of the concert.

Each concert will be presented without intermission.

The audience will be encouraged to leave row-by-row.

Questions? Concerns? Contact <mgdir@mnguitar.org>.

As conditions or circumstances require, we will post new information to our website and Facebook page, and email everyone on our list.

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## Jazz for the Classical Guitarist: A Benefit Workshop for the MGS Saturday, December 18, 1 pm CST

In this two-hour, online workshop for intermediate (or beyond) classical guitarists, internationally acclaimed jazz master Mimi Fox will guide the participants through the process of acquiring the techniques, tools, and approaches needed to play solo jazz guitar (finger style and with a pick). Based on the methodology presented in her best-selling courses/books for Truefire and Mel Bay Publications, she will demonstrate scales, arpeggios, and chord voicings as applied to two well-known standards from the Great American Songbook, and explain how to use the same process with any songs a guitarist might wish to “jazzify.”

**All proceeds from this workshop are a donation to the Minnesota Guitar Society in support of our Guitar In Our Schools program.**

Advance registration is \$45 (\$60 on the day of the workshop). To learn more and register for the class, visit [www.mnguitar.org](http://www.mnguitar.org).

### About Mimi Fox

In addition to awards from *Downbeat* magazine and five-star reviews from leading publications for her recordings and performances, all recognizing her work as an artist and composer, Mimi Fox has earned high praise for her role in jazz and guitar education. She received an award for outstanding contributions from the International Association of Jazz Educators. She is the creator and head of the Guitar Department at the California Jazz Conservatory in Berkeley. She has been an adjunct/visiting professor at NYU, The Brubeck Institute, Berklee College of Music, and Yale University, in addition to leading workshops and clinics throughout Europe, Asia, Australia, and the Caribbean at major jazz festivals and universities.



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## Powderhorn Park Music Project

Begun in 2020 by U of MN guitar professor and MGS member Maja Radovanlija (assisted by Milena Petković and Ben Kunkel), the Powderhorn Park Music Project offers free guitar lessons and classes every Saturday at Walker United Methodist Church (3104 16th Ave. S. in Minneapolis). To learn more about the project, make a contribution, or inquire about donating a guitar, visit <https://powderhorn-park-music-project.business.site/> or email <[mradovan@umn.edu](mailto:mradovan@umn.edu)>.

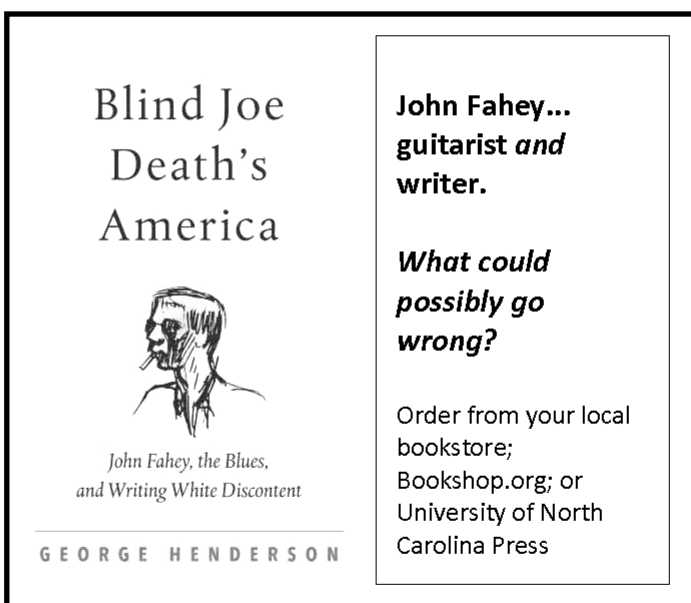
## OpenStage Update

Our longtime home for OpenStage, the coffeehouse in Falcon Heights most recently operated under the name Eggroll Queen Music Café, has new ownership. Plans for future music there are, as we go to press, uncertain. For now, OpenStage is on hiatus. But we will be back! To get the latest news, visit our website page and sign up for the OpenStage email list. Or email us with your comments, suggestions, ideas, on how to relaunch this much-loved part of our programming, at <[mgdir@mnguitar.org](mailto:mgdir@mnguitar.org)> .

## Board of Directors Update

With the end of 2021, we say a hearty thank you to four board members who are stepping down: Douglas Whorton, Jackson Simon, Mary Ellison, and Bill Mask. Their many contributions are valued and we hope to see them all at concerts and other MGS events. We welcome new board members Ethan Flatten, Stephen Greenwood, and Aly Spitzenberger. We'll share more about all the board members, continuing and new alike, in future issues of the newsletter.

Please note the Secretary position is open. Interested in filling it? Email Paul at <[mgdir@mnguitar.org](mailto:mgdir@mnguitar.org)>. He will be glad you did!



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Through the **Guitar In Our Schools (GIOS)** program, we work with un- or under-funded music programs at metro area K-12 public schools to support guitar classes where they exist and help create them where the full-time music teaching staff and school administration have identified a need. We provide visits by visiting international artists to give masterclasses or mini-concerts, residencies by skilled and experienced local teaching artists, and material support (curriculum, guitars, accessories).

### **Our Partners**

This fall, we started working at Harding High School in St. Paul. Milena Petković, who has been part of the GIOS team since we started the program, is visiting the school once a week to work with the two beginning guitar classes created there by Band Director Jennifer Greupner.

Also this fall, we returned to Roosevelt High School in Minneapolis after a year away, to support music teacher Nick Wilson (band, orchestra, general music) and his strong two-semester program of guitar classes. Our September concert artist, René Izquierdo, visited the combined classes the day before his Sundin Hall concert to play for the students and engage in some spirited Q&A. Henry Johnston will visit both Roosevelt and Parkway Middle School while he's here. We're glad to be back at Roosevelt and hope to help Nick start a guitar orchestra there in the near future.

Our other continuing partner is Parkway Middle School in St. Paul. Their creative, student-focused model is well-represented by Parkway music teacher Denae Olson, who single-handedly launched a guitar class with some duct-taped-together instruments and only a basic knowledge of the guitar. The class always fills, even when it's online! We didn't provide a new supply of duct tape, but last year we did send more than a dozen new guitars, and an energetic visiting teacher, Ben Abrahamson, who did wonderful work online with the students, creating special video lessons for them to use. Ben's back there this fall, every day, in-person.

### **The Students We Serve**

#### **Roosevelt High School, Minneapolis**

Hispanic: 33.7%; African American: 32.6%; White: 25.2%; Asian: 3.5%; American Indian: 2.6%; Two or more races: 2.3%; Pacific Islander: 0.1%; Free/discounted lunch recipients: 68.1%.

#### **Harding High School, St. Paul**

Asian: 55.4%; African American: 19.8%; Hispanic: 14.7%; White: 5.7%; Two or more races: 2.3%; American Indian: 2.2%; Free/discounted lunch recipients: 75.1%.

#### **Parkway Middle School, St. Paul**

Asian American: 31.3%; African American: 31%; Hispanic American: 13.5%; White: 22.8%; American Indian: 1.4%; Special Education: 23.9%; Free / Reduced lunch: 7.5%; English Language Learning: 31%.

### **Our Team of Teachers**

**Ben Abrahamson**, a graduate of Macalester College in St. Paul, has performed across Minnesota, including at several MGS events, and beyond. He's a part of the Acoustic Guitar Showcase, a member of the flamenco community, and an active teacher. He's known for his original music and an innovative series of video interviews with emerging artists in various musical styles, available on his YouTube channel.

Multi-instrumentalist **Ryan Picone** holds a master's degree in music performance from Arizona State University and also studied at the CSI Conservatory in Lugano, Switzerland, where he received his certificate of completion. A guitarist for over 22 years, he has been teaching and playing professionally for over 14 years. He has performed in Italy, Switzerland, Turkey, and all across the US. His teaching background includes classroom guitar for students from kindergarten to undergraduate, studio teaching, and presenting masterclasses. As a performer, he has a special interest in the "Hot Club" style of jazz pioneered by Django Reinhardt. For our team, he's visiting the guitar class at Roosevelt High School once a week, working one-on-one with students as well as coaching them as a group.

**Milena Petković** has established a reputation as a solo classical guitarist, in duos with Maja Radovanlija and Ben Kunkel, and as the newest member of the internationally known Minneapolis Guitar Quartet. She holds degrees from the University of Novi Sad (Serbia), Indiana University, and the University of Minnesota. She was featured in a Showcase concert for our Society in 2019, and can be found on YouTube—look for her performance of *Asturias* recorded for MPR. She is on the faculty of both the St. Paul Conservatory of Music and St. Joseph's School of Music.



## GUITAR IN OUR SCHOOLS (GIOS)



Above: Ben Abrahamson leads the guitar class in a harmonious exploration at Parkway Middle School. Right, two views of Ryan Picone sharing guitaristical thoughts with students at Roosevelt High School. To come (in the next issue): Milena Petković and students at Harding High School investigate some melodious mysteries together.



**Help send our 3 GIOS teachers to these schools for the rest of the school year. We need your support to raise an additional \$2,500. Please consider a year-end donation through our website, and put “for GIOS” in the comment box. Any amount makes a difference. Thanks!**

**We thank the following for their support of our Guitar In Our Schools program throughout 2021:**



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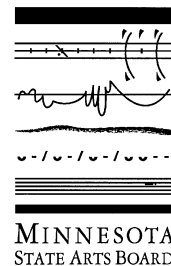
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**DUO INTEREST?** Banjo (and guitar player) looking for guitarist to play together. I started playing banjo in June 2020. Am improving all the time, but looking to truly become a better player by being part of a duo ... or a trio if there are two of you out there. Email Melanie at <jmchristianson@comcast.net> if interested. Ideally someone from western suburbs but doesn't have to be.

**The Minnesota Guitar Society**

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