

KOBLENZ FESTIVAL & LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

A Report by THÉRÈSE WASSILY SABA

THE KOBLENZ International Guitar Academy's Lifetime Achievement Award was an added bonus event among the many other special performances at the 22nd Koblenz International Guitar Festival & Academy, held from 2–9 June 2014 in Koblenz, Germany. There were at least two concert performances each day presenting the top international guitarists, as well as some very fine young players, who will be the stars of the future. The Koblenz International Guitar Competition 'Hubert Käppel' is an annual competition that takes place during the festival and attracts participants from all over the world. Jazz has always been a respected style at the festival and this year the festival presented Frank Haunschild Trio with the young Ukrainian jazz guitarist, Vitaliy Zolotov. The Junior Guitar Academy were in full force again over the Pentecost holiday weekend, hopefully with some more stars of the future in there as well.

The Koblenz International Guitar Academy awarded Lifetime Achievement Awards to John D'Addario jnr, Vice Chairman of D'Addario & Company, on behalf of himself, the D'Addario Foundation, and D'Addario & Company, Inc. and Bernard Maillot, Chef d'entreprise of Savarez sa, on behalf himself and



Pepe Romero, David Russell and Manuel Barrueco.

Savarez. Both of these string companies were begun by a previous generation, and both companies are being run by future generations. The Award ceremony took place at the Kurfürstliches Schloss on Monday 9 June 2014. As John D'Addario jnr and Bernard Maillot entered, the young guitarists of the Koblenz Junior Academy held their guitars high in the air forming a 'guard of honour'. The brass quartet of the Musikschule der Stadt Koblenz played the opening music followed by the speeches given by Dorothea Buchwald on behalf of the City of Koblenz, Dr. Richard Koch-Sembdner, President of the Koblenz

International Guitar Society, Günter F. C. Forsteneichner of the Koblenz International Guitar Academy and the Laudatio for John D'Addario jnr was given by Prof. Dr. Willi Nieratschker of the Hochschule Koblenz, the University of Applied Science, and the Laudatio for Bernard Maillot was given by Günter F. C. Forsteneichner. Alvaro Pierri played three sets of music during the ceremony and we were all curious to know which strings he was using: D'Addario or



John D'Addario jnr and Bernard Maillot arrive with the Junior Guitar Academy guard of honour.



Alvaro Pierri performing at the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony.

Savarez?! He began by telling a story about how guitarists are always discussing whether they are playing a cedar guitar or a spruce guitar; and then whether they are using D'Addario or Savarez strings. He brought two guitars on stage, but then explained that each of the guitars had a mixed combination of both D'Addario and Savarez strings.

This is only the third time the Academy has given the Lifetime Achievement Award; previously it was awarded to Pepe Romero and Celin Romero, on behalf of the whole Romero family and to Konrad Ragosnig.

Marcin Dylla gave an excellent opening night concert featuring *The Sonata of Loneliness* by Peteris Vasks (born 1946) as well as superb performances of Ponce's *Theme Variations and Fugue on 'La Folia'* and works by Diabelli, Schubert and Magnus Lindberg. The Koblenz Festival concerts reliably have a high level of musicianship and I noticed the students at the festival were still talking about Marcin Dylla's fine performance a few days later. Needless to say this level continued with Pavel Steidl on the next evening playing Mertz, Coste and alternating between pieces by Leos Janacek and Jana Obrovská to stimulate our musical imagination to compare these works. Manuel Barrueco performed works by Bach, Piazzolla which he has transcribed for guitar trio and also a piece by



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Sabrina Vlaskalic in concert.

Chen Yi called *China West Suite*. He performed with the Beijing Guitar Duo in a concert co-presented by the Koblenz Guitar Festival and the Koblenzer Kammerkonzerte, a chamber music society which was established in 1872. Manuel Barrueco also gave an unforgettable solo performance of Turina's *Sonata*. The evening concerts continued with David Russell playing Sor, Bach and his new transcription of *Sonata in B flat major* by Vivaldi, which he transcribed especially for the audience of the Koblenz Festival; and they appreciated it very much. He also played two pieces dedicated to him: *Jubilosa Plenitud* by Juan Sarrocha and *Sonatina* by Jorge Morel. Pepe Romero produced a wonderful tone quality which filled the hall in his



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David Dyakov in concert.

solo evening recital, playing pieces by Milan, Mudarra, Giuliani, his father Celedonio Romero, Rodrigo, Falla, Torroba, Turina and Tárrega. Understated, beautiful, a benchmark performance, wonderful, very personal – my jotted down notes read... To be able to hear all of these top guitarists in the one week is really like a wonderful dream! What is more, they offered food for the soul.

As well as enjoying the high quality of the evening concerts, this year I found that the daily 5pm series of recitals were equally inspiring. In the smaller concert room of the Rhein-Mosel Halle which has ceiling to floor windows looking out onto the Rhein river and the beautiful green trees on its banks, one could hear the stars of the future, young performers, full of musical ideas and very impressive techniques which allowed them to express themselves fully on their instruments. Anyone concerned about the future of the guitar, should have attended the 5pm series at the Koblenz Festival!

The Bulgarian guitarist David Dyakov (born 1994) won First Prize at the Koblenz International Guitar Competition 'Hubert Käppel' in 2011. Part of that prize was to make a recording. The title of that recording (with KSG Exaudio) was *Il Diabolico* – he recorded J. S. Bach's Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004 and of course, five of Paganini's Caprices. Paganini was known as 'Il Diabolico' because of his phenomenal technique, but watching David Dyakov perform, with his relaxed and virtuosic technique on the



PHOTO: THÉRÈSE WASSILY SABA

Aniello Desiderio performing with the Staatsorchester Rheinische Philharmonie, conducted by David Danzmayr.



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John D'Addario jnr and Bernard Maillot receive their Lifetime Achievement Awards from Prof. Ingeborg Henzler.



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Jury of the Koblenz International Guitar Competition 'Hubert Käppel'.

instrument, one can see that David Dyakov might have a link not only with Paganini's music but also with the spirit of Paganini. In this Koblenz concert he played the Antonio José *Sonata*, three Paganini Caprices, and *Evocation* by Curtis Curtis-Smith.

The Serbian guitarist Sabrina Vlaskalic gave the next 5pm concert and it was just as full of musical ideas and played with excellent technique. All the repertoire she played was special but her performance of Dusan Bogdanovic's *Six Balkan Miniatures* was played as I have never heard it before: she really brought out the folk music inspiration of these pieces so well. Alberto Ginastera's *Sonata*, Op. 47 is often on young guitarists' concert programmes these days, but it's

musical content is not always fully understood. However, Sabrina Vlaskalic understood everything in Ginastera's music and she played it brilliantly. Both the Bogdanovic and the Ginastera required percussion on the guitar; some guitarists go carefully here in order to not damage their guitars but not Sabrina Vlaskalic – for her the music comes first and the guitar comes second – this produced an extra element of excitement in her performance. She is a very passionate player and, like David Dyakov, is an absolute pleasure to listen to.

The Montenegrin guitarist Goran Krivokapic is always excellent and he always changes the published programme. We were fortunate to hear his interpretation of Bach's *Sonata No. 2*, BWV 1003. In his

lecture/recital Alexander-Sergei Ramirez told us of the rediscovery of the music of the Peruvian composer Pedro Ximenez de Abriell y Tirado (1780–1857) who wrote 119 guitar pieces, works for cello and guitar and two *Divertimenti* for guitar and ensemble. Alexander-Sergei Ramirez played a selection of these attractive pieces. He has made a recording of these pieces on *Guitarra Clasica del Peru*, and has also edited *100 Minuetos for Guitar Solo* by Pedro Ximenez de Abriell, published by Edition Chanterelle im Allegra Musikverlag.

Chai-Wei Lin from Taiwan, who won First Prize at the 2013 Koblenz International Guitar Competition 'Hubert Käppel' played a recital in the 5pm series; he gave an excellent performance of Bach's *Sonata BWV 1005*, as well as playing some Chinese pieces which will appear on his new recording.

The 'Friday Night for Guitar & Orchestra' concert featured the Italian guitarist, Aniello Desiderio, performing with the Staatsorchester Rheinische Philharmonie, conducted by David Danzmayr at the Rhein-Mosel Halle. They played *Fantasia para un Gentilhombre* by Joaquin Rodrigo and *Concierto para guitarra No. 2 de Lieja* (1981) by Leo Brouwer. As responses of the audiences of the classical music world have proven, one can never hear the Rodrigo



PHOTO: CARSTEN HEINRICH

Wolfgang Dey and Hubert Käppel.

concertos too often, but it was enlightening to hear a large-scale work by Leo Brouwer, particularly as we are so often playing his solo repertoire on the guitar. Both works were very exciting to listen to; fortunately, Aniello Desiderio has the musical and technical strength to perform two concertos in one evening, and very well at that. This concert was presented in collaboration with Musik-Institut-Koblenz, which was founded in 1808.

On Saturday 7 June, the concert programme was very full, starting with a lecture/recital by Gerhard Reichenbach about transcribing Bach for the guitar. So many of us feel strongly about Bach and it was good to listen to Gerhard Reichenbach articulate his reasons. He played us two partitas for keyboard which he has transcribed: Partita No. 3, BWV 827 and Partita No. 1, BWV 825. The duo of Wolfgang Dey on various sized recorders and Hubert Käppel on the guitar gave a fine lunchtime performance in the Florinskirche, one of the old churches in central Koblenz, which was absolutely full. Zoran Dukic played the 5pm concert, performing a *Sonata* by Vojislav Ivanovic which was written 20 years ago but only published by Chanterelle last year. Of course his interpretation of *Six Balkan Miniatures* by Dusan Bogdanovic was very good but also it was completely different to the performance earlier in the week by Sabrina Vlaskalic; that was instructive. At 6.30pm the Peruvian guitarist Jorge Caballero played some movements from Yamashita's arrangement of *Pictures at an Exhibition*



PHOTO: CARSTEN HEINRICH

Günter Schillings rehearsing with the ensemble of the Junior Guitar Academy.

by Mussorgsky. It is some years since the Japanese guitarist shocked and surprised the guitar world by transcribing and performing this tour de force on the guitar. Not many a brave guitarist has trodden down that same path until now, so it was really something to hear live. Jorge Caballero also played some pieces by Albéniz. The very full day ended with the excellent solo recital by Pepe Romero.

The Sunday night jazz concert, featuring the Frank Haunschild Trio, was held in the open-air stage of the fortress in Ehrenbreitstein, alongside the Rhein river. Performing with the Frank Haunschild Trio was the young Ukrainian jazz guitarist, Vitaliy Zolotov, who stepped in as unfortunately, Philip Catherine had fallen ill. The guitarists Haunschild and Zolotov understood each other very well and their musical exchanges were an absolute pleasure to listen to. This concert was presented in collaboration with the Jazz Club

Koblenz and Café Hahn.

Another important event at this year's festival was the D'Addario launch of their new Pro-Arte Carbon strings and their updated string packaging on Friday 6 June 2014 in the Rhein-Mosel-Halle. John D'Addario jnr, Vice Chairman of D'Addario & Company, was there for the launch, which was a celebration for the students and artists, with drinks and cocktails and many sets of strings being given away.

There was a continuous timetable of masterclasses throughout the festival. The featured public masterclasses were given by David Russell, Manuel Barrueco, Alvaro Pierri, Marcin Dylla. At the same time there were masterclasses given by Hubert Käppel, Costas Cotsiolis, Tadashi Sasaki, Jorge Caballero, Pavel Steidl, Judicaël Perroy, Gerhard Reichenbach, Goran Krivokapic, Thomas Offermann and the Beijing Guitar Duo – an absolute feast of inspiration. The



PHOTO: THÉRÈSE WASSILY SABA

Frank Haunschild Trio and Vitaliy Zolotov at Festung Ehrenbreitstein.

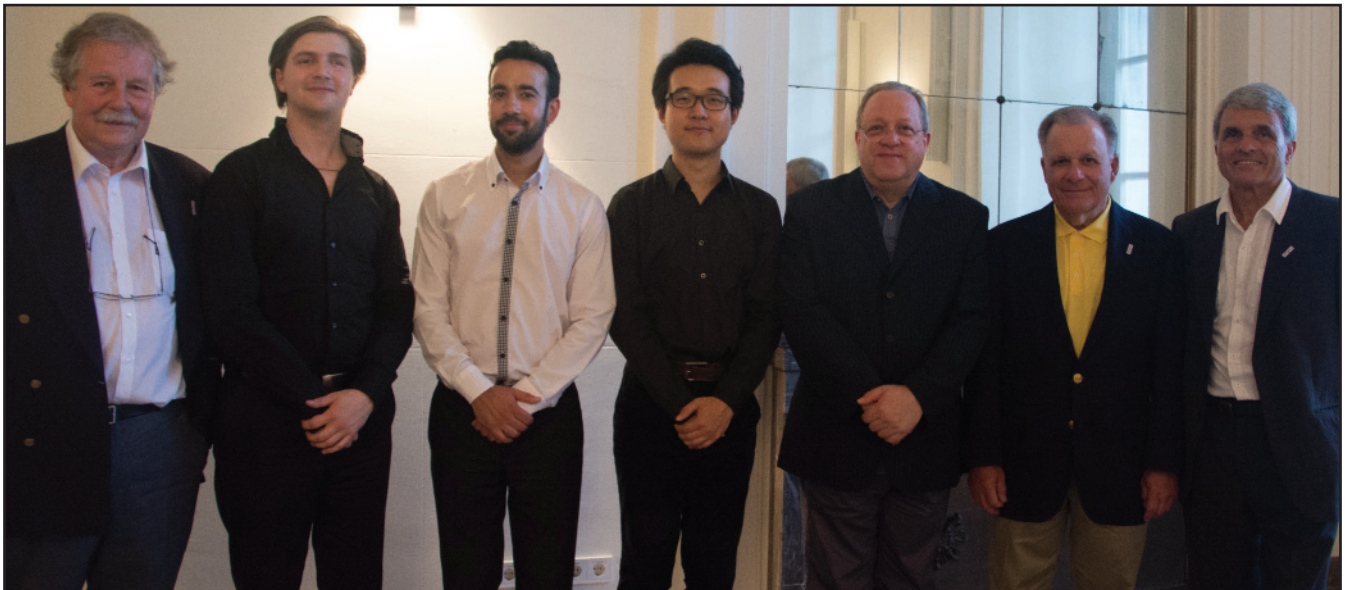


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(From left) Günter Forsteneichner, Vojin Kocic, Eren Süalp, Jinsae Kim, Lucio Matarazzo, John D'Addario jnr, Bernard Maillot.

Junior Guitar Academy for young guitarists ran over the long Pentecost holiday weekend. They worked on Bach's *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*, with their teachers Günter Schillings, Russell Poyner and Matthew Peters.

A Catholic Mass was held at the City-Kirche, the Jesuit church in the cobble-stoned Jesuiten Platz to celebrate the feast of Pentecost. A four-voice ensemble with soprano (Kirsten Maxeiner), alto (Almut Nieratschker), tenor (Thomas Kaiser) and bass (Willi Nieratschker, who also played the organ) sung as the children's guitar ensemble of the Junior Guitar Academy, conducted by Günter Schillings, played his arrangements of *Im Balladenton* from *Lyric Pieces*, Op. 65 by Edvard Grieg and Bach's *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*. Russell Poyner sang the Gregorian *Credo* unaccompanied. Guitar solos were performed by Sabrina Vlaskavic, Alexander-Sergei Ramirez, David Russell, Judicaël Perroy, Gerhard Reichenbach, the duo of Aniello Desiderio and Lucio Matarazzo and the duo of Russell Poyner and Monika Dawidek (oboe). The money collected from this Mass service will go to the 'ONGD David Russell y María Jesús' to build water wells in Africa.

The Finals of the Koblenz International Guitar Competition 'Hubert Käppel' 2014 were held at the Kurfürstliches Schloß on Sunday 8 June 2014. There were

five finalists: Clovis Dethier (France), Vojin Kocic (Serbia), Jérémy Peret (France), Jinsae Kim (Korea) and Eren Süalp (Turkey). The competition winners were: First Prize: not awarded; Second Prize: ex aequo to Eren Süalp (Turkey) and Vojin Kocic (Serbia); and Third Prize: Jinsae Kim (Korea). The Premio Joaquín Rodrigo for the best interpretation of a work by Joaquín Rodrigo was awarded to Vojin Kocic (Serbia). The international jury was headed by Prof. Lucio Matarazzo, with Prof. Hubert Käppel, Prof. Alfred Eickholt, Prof. Tadashi Sasaki, Prof. Judicaël Perroy, Prof. Gerhard Reichenbach, Prof. Dr. Thomas Offermann, Prof. Costas Cotsiolis, Sabrina Vlaskalic, Max Op den Camp and Thérèse Wassily Saba.

The Prize-winners concert, which is the final concert of the festival, on the Monday evening, was very well attended as always. The orchestra of the Junior Guitar Academy performed again with the four singers. The three prize winners: Eren Süalp, Vojin Kocic and Jinsae Kim gave good performances, which left everyone happy after a full week of excellent music.

There were many guitar makers exhibiting their instruments in the

bright and airy foyer of the Rhein-Mosel-Halle, including: Antonius Müller, Gert Petersen, Kazuo Sato, Mario Gropp, Daryl Perry, Michael Wichmann, Robert Gose, José Ramírez, Serge Drijakoff, Stefan Nitschke, Alessandro Marseglia, Francesco Pignataro, Pete Beer, Dennis Tolz, Gérard Aurdirac, Christian Koehn, Franz Butscher, Jens Towet, Friedericke Linscheid, Stephan Schlemper, the guitar case maker Zlatko Parlov and Musik Thilemann.

It was a pleasure to catch up with Michael Macmeecken – although he sold his Chanterelle guitar festival shop to Octavian Badea of Guitarrissimo, he continues to travel to the festivals with Octavian Badea to assist him. Michael Macmeecken's Edition Chanterelle im Allegra Musikverlag is continuing to publish some invaluable new and old but unpublished repertoire. Other special exhibitors at the festival were Bernard Maillot of Savarez and Prof. Dr. Thomas Offermann of D'Addario; the whole festival is best summarised in Pepe Romero's words: 'The personal interchange, the masterclasses, the concerts, the special feeling of brotherhood in which the competition takes place, all provide an environment for true love to be experienced through the guitar.'

**The Festival & Academy website is at: www.koblenzguitarfestival.de
The Festival Blog is at: <http://Koblenzguitarfestival.wordpress.com>
The Twitter address is: @koblenzquitfest**