

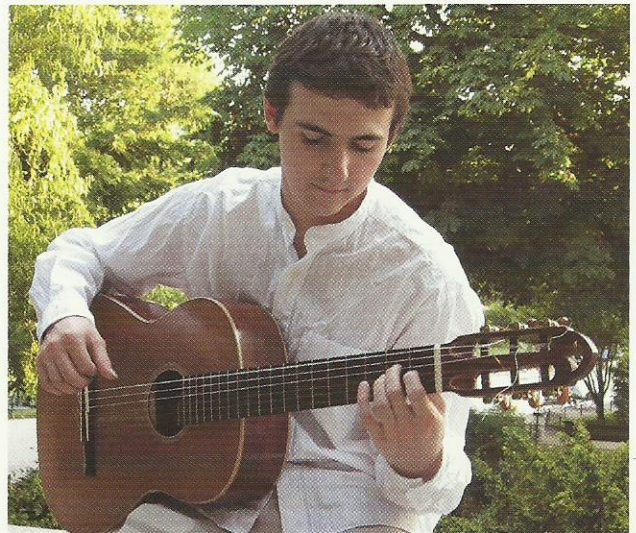
## IVOR MAIRANTS GUITAR AWARD

November 2006  
Cutlers' Hall

Fifteen young guitarists entered for the 2006 Guitar Competition, which was founded by the late Ivor Mairants and is administered by the Worshipful Company of Musicians. Two of them failed to turn up, mercifully for the hard-pressed panel of judges in this one-day single-round event, but the 13 who did showed clearly that the current international standard of guitar performance and interpretation is indeed very high.

An astonishing eleven nationalities were represented, though it should be borne in mind that students did not necessarily travel specifically from as far afield as Cuba, Russia and New Zealand but in many instances were already studying in Europe. The biggest contingent came from

France, with no fewer than four of Roland Dyens' talented students from the Conservatoire Nationale Supérieur de Musique de Paris. Two of them were placed in the first three: Nicolas Papin, 24, first prize; and Orestis Kalampalikis, 25, third prize. The second prize went to Irina Kulikova, 24, from Russia, who gained a special award last time but who has made a great stride forward under the guidance of her teacher in Salzburg, Marco Tamayo. She has the potential to become a powerful presence on the guitar scene and only needs to organise her talents so that she does full justice to them.



Nicolas Papin

It should be said that so high was the overall level that at least six of the contestants deserved a prize, so much did they contribute in the way of imagination

## WIGMORE HALL PLATFORM CONCERT

October 2006  
Katie Stillman and Simon Lane  
(violin and piano duo)  
Milos Karadaglic (classical guitar)

Presented by the Worshipful Company of Musicians and supported by The Maisie Lewis Young Artists fund, three young prize-winners showed off a variety of genres of music: from Mozart to Britten, played by violin and piano (duet) and classical guitar (solo), some pieces being more discerning and others more cryptic, all to an enthusiastic and accepting audience at Wigmore Hall.

Mozart once wrote that, "In order to win applause one must write stuff which is so inane that a fiacre (horse drawn carriage) could sing it, or so unintelligible that it pleases precisely because no sensible man can understand it" (1782 letter to his father). It was rather a surprise therefore that the opening work, Mozart's *Sonata in F major K376*, which is neither 'inane' or 'unintelligible', played by two fine musicians, Katie Stillman (violin) and Simon Lane (piano), failed to grip the

audience in the way it should have done. There is much promise in the *andante* section with a sedate violin part and mellifluous tones on the piano, but the unbalanced nature of a piano playing with its top wide open and a violin struggling to match the volume left the rest of the *Sonata* wanting more attention.

The audience's expectations were fulfilled in the second half of the programme when the duo found their true form in an outstanding performance of Brahms' *Sonata No 3 in D minor Op 108*, the third of three surviving sonatas. The slightly more dramatic edge to the music allowed Stillman more of an opportunity to project the violin part with gusto, and she did this with style, particularly in the final *presto agitato* movement. A refined balance in the slower, stately *adagio* section enabled them to produce a pathos worthy of the elegant music.

Between these two duet performances, the 23 year old classical guitarist Milos Karadaglic played Sor's *Grand Solo* and Britten's *Nocturnal After a Theme of John Dowland*. The former was a wonderful display of the guitar's capacity for showmanship and dexterity, easy to the ear and fun, whilst the *Nocturnal* hints towards the 'unintelligible' aspect

of composition described by Mozart. You are led through craggy, unsure stages of sleep, through moments of nightmarish restlessness to a consonant final movement, based on Dowland's song *Come heavy sleep*, in which sleep finally arrives, peaceful and calming. Karadaglic played the *Nocturnal* with such a facility that some of the harmonics comatosed even the most attentive of audience members.

Following the violin and piano's Brahms *Sonata* in the second half of the concert, Karadaglic treated us to Barrios Mangoré's 1918 tremolo work *Un sueño en la floresta* and Ginastera's *Sonata for Solo Guitar Op.47*. Ginastera's composition has a rollercoaster ride of guitar sounds. Complete with the scraping of strings and the rhythmic hitting and tapping of the guitar top, Karadaglic informed the audience what the guitar is capable of and did it with musical verve.

Mozart is therefore wrong. What wins the applause is not necessarily the compositional elements of a piece of music but the musicality of the performers, and in this concert of superb professionalism the musicians have shown this to resounding success and applause.  
Oliver McGhie  
Features Editor of *Classical Guitar* magazine



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