

# International Guitar Festival 2000

## (Singapore)

*To TOMAS Music Consultants with many thanks for a great festival and wonderful time to keep on going.*

*CONSULTANTS*

*Aug 31 - Sept 2000*



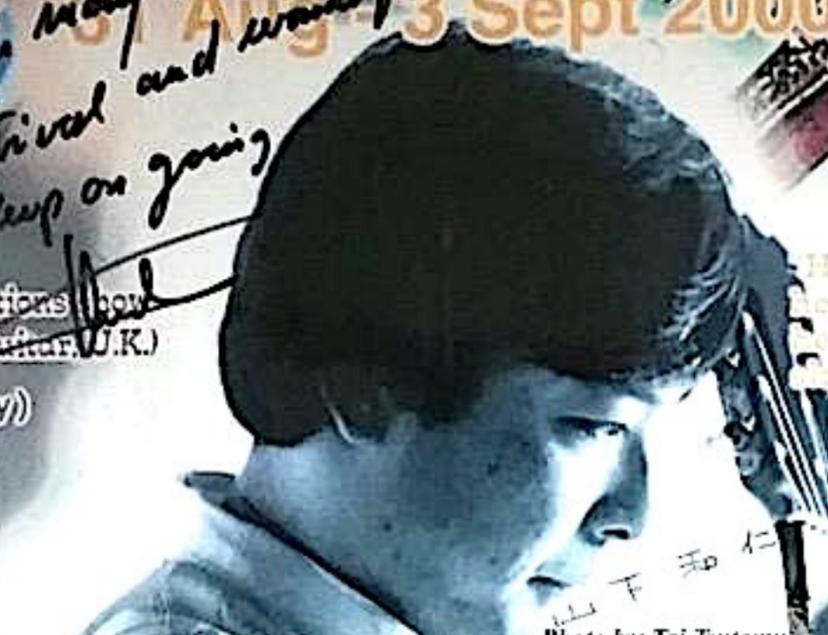
**"A versatile artist. His own compositions show a sure touch"**  
(Classical Guitar, U.K.)

**Hucky Eichelmann (Germany)**  
Date : Fri, 1st September 2000  
Venue: DBS Auditorium  
Time : 8.00pm  
Ticket Price: S\$15, S\$20, S\$30 & S\$40



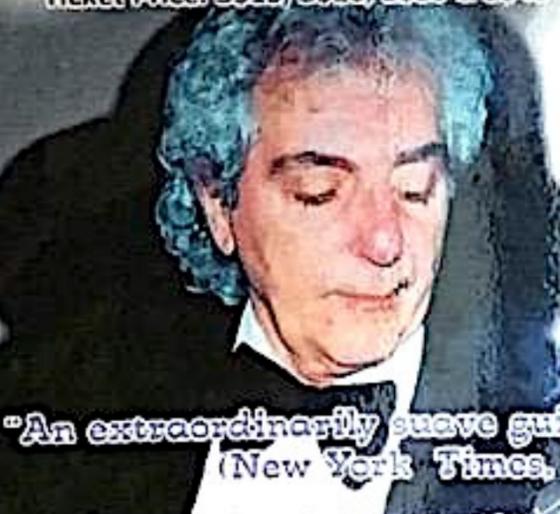
**"He is a musician of the highest order. He has an incredible facility. Crocchi can also produce beautiful tones."**  
(Classical Guitar, U.S.A.)

**Flavio Crocchi (Italy)**  
Date : Sat, 2nd September 2000  
Venue: Copthorne Orchard Singapore  
Time : 8.00pm  
Ticket Price: S\$20 (Free seating)



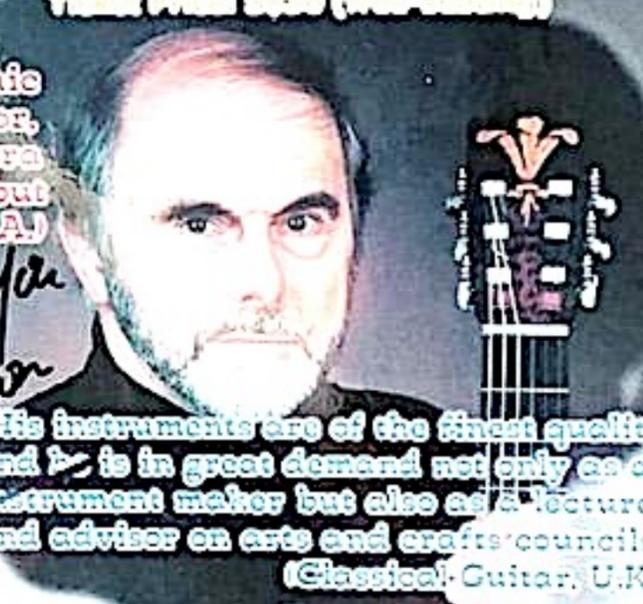
**".....passionate expression, enormous dynamic range and extensive palette of tone color, transformed his guitar into a whole orchestra in a performance that was not only dazzling but deeply touching"** (The Boston Herald, U.S.A.)

**Kazuhito Yamashita (Japan)**  
Date : Thu, 31st August 2000  
Venue: Victoria Concert Hall  
Time : 8.00pm  
Ticket Price: S\$20, S\$30, S\$40 & S\$50



**"An extraordinarily suave guitarist"**  
(New York Times, U.S.A.)

**Jorge Morel (Argentina)**  
Date : Sun, 3rd September 2000  
Venue: Victoria Concert Hall  
Time : 8.00pm  
Ticket Price: S\$15, S\$20, S\$30 & S\$40



**"His instruments are of the finest quality and he is in great demand not only as an instrument maker but also as a lecturer and adviser on arts and crafts councils"**  
(Classical Guitar, U.K.)

**Paul Fischer (United Kingdom)**  
Date : 1-2 September 2000  
Venue: Copthorne Orchard Singapore



**Ernest Kwok (Singapore)**  
Date : Fri, 1st September 2000  
Venue: Copthorne Orchard Singapore  
Time : 1.30pm  
Ticket Price: Free to all full-time participants

**TICKETS:** 10 consult with Paul

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**Jeffrey Yong (Malaysia)**  
Date : Sat, 2nd September 2000  
Venue: Copthorne Orchard Singapore  
Time : 1.30pm  
Ticket Price: Free to all full-time participants

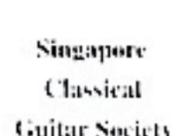
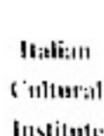
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# SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL GUITAR FESTIVAL 2000

Observed by PETER BYRNE-VEREKER

SINGAPORE is a meeting point between east and west, bristling with economic activity and showing increasing sophistication. The inaugural Singapore International Guitar Festival held over an intensive four days and nights from 31 August to 3 September 2000, offered an outstanding variety of recitals and informative seminars. A joint venture between Tomas Music Consultants and the Singapore Classical Guitar Society, it was presented with a high level of professionalism, a credit to the organisers, sponsors and volunteers.

Kazuhito Yamashita (Japan), Hucky Eichelmann (Germany), Flavio Cucchi (Italy) and Jorge Morel (Argentina) performed major recitals and participated in day seminars.

The Victoria Theatre, a vestige of Singapore's colonial heritage, was the opening recital venue on the Thursday for Kazuhito Yamashita. His virtuosic technique and affected style of presentation was initially captivating for the audience but became predictable and a little wearing as the programme progressed. Yamashita used histrionic hand gestures including full circles with the right arm, and moved the guitar around like a form of choreography with the sound aimed in a variety of directions.

Yamashita enticed the audience with his arrangement of the traditional *Song of Compostela* as his opening piece. In contrast, the remainder of the programme highlighted contemporary works by Keiko Fujiie (1963, Japan). Whereas Fujiie's works, including *Bodrum Sea* (1992), *Three Poems* (1995) and *The Night* (1994) featured nostalgic movements and sketched vivid images, their similarity to one another fuelled the audience's desire for variety, bordering on unease at the break.

After the interval we heard *Fantasia in 2000* by Liu Xiaogen (1955, China) and *Rising Spirals*, Chinary Ung (1942, Cambodia), an evocative and at times, perfumed allegory of musical gestures by Yamashita. The final composition by Fujiie, 'In Their Shoes', part of a project to record 'women's experiences during the Second World War', surprised with melodic elements reminiscent of the *Londonderry Air* and Barrios's *Vals Op. 8, No. 3*. Familiar encores closed Yamashita's innovative recital.



(Left to right) Thomas Liauw, Paul Fischer, Flavio Cucchi, Hucky Eichelmann and Kazuhito Yamashita. (Front) Jorge Morel.

Seminars on the luthier's art were presented on the Friday by Paul Fischer (England). His research in Brazil and Asia during the early 1970s detailed sources of diminishing exotic timbers. He mounted the case for using alternative species to the now-protected but much-prized Brazilian rosewood.

Ernest Kwok (Singapore) performed a short lunchtime recital presenting a variety of pieces. *Verano Porteño* (Piazzolla), *Tango en skaï* (Dyens), *Granada* (Albéniz), *Gran Jota* (Tárrega) and *Prelude No.1* (Villa-Lobos) drew appreciative applause from participants attending festival seminars at the palatial Copthorne Orchid Singapore.

Latin guitar virtuoso Jorge Morel gave a workshop on the rhythmic styles of South America. He demonstrated a variety of Argentine forms including malambo, zamba, tango and canción, then samba and bossa nova from Brazil, finishing with hemiola from the Caribbean. Morel explained his guitaristic approach to making arrangements, using his delightful *West Side Story Suite* based

on the musical by Leonard Bernstein. Participants were surprised to hear the variety of 'Puerto Rican' rhythms that underpinned the score. To conclude, the maestro stated that 'minor keys effect romantic/emotive moods or lyrics' akin to an Argentine sensibility (as evidenced by 80 per cent of Piazzolla's opus). The more upbeat major keys, which are less reflective or nostalgic, are more common in Brazil.

Morel's final seminar, on composition and arrangement technique, reviewed standards such as *Asturias* and *Sevilla* by Albéniz. The main point is to determine the appropriate key to suit the chordal position on the fingerboard. He demonstrated guitaristic techniques to compensate for the lack of sustain on the instrument compared to the piano, adding elements such as harmonics, arpeggios and portamento (to highlight a clean note with vibrato). His approach certainly was idiomatic and not 'guitar as light orchestra' à la Brouwer. Morel closed the session to riotous effect with the revelation: 'I hate to use the pinkie - little finger - because it is small and ugly.'

Another enjoyable aspect of the festival was the masterclasses. Italian guitarist Flavio Cucchi conducted an entertaining and informative session, stating the key aim that 'The desire for communicating is the essence of music - not perfection, technique or precision.' Cucchi also used the analogy of acting like a conductor when interpreting a new piece (to determine the pulse of the rubato). He said, 'You are a spiritual being and so must conduct the body that is playing.' He shared a final point on 'performance anxiety', alluding to Segovia: 'Have some physical distance from the guitar. Don't be too concentrated or possessive of it!'

The Friday evening concert was by Hucky Eichelmann (based in Bangkok) who has carved a niche out of taking music from the east to the west and vice versa. A consummate performer, Eichelmann presented a diverse and virtuosic programme, often introducing each piece with humorous anecdotes. He quickly created a great rapport with an audience that was eager to show its appreciation. Even so, several E-minor style pieces early in the recital created a sombre mood. Later, this atmosphere was blown away with his percussive disco-funk signature tune *Hat Nal Harn*, by Georg Lawall. Eichelmann also premiered several pieces from *Candlelight Blues*, a new volume of his arrangements based on compositions by H. M. The King of Thailand (CG, Oct. 2000). Most of Eichelmann's pieces featured clean melodic lines requiring a precise rhythmic accompaniment, such as Vivaldi's Concerto in D or the



Flavio Cucchi workshop.

attractive *Sakura Variations* by Yucuchiro Yocoh. Overall, he created a sensitive nostalgic mood professionally delivered by his high-powered Jim Redgate guitar, easily overcoming the dry acoustics of the DBS Auditorium.

The Saturday seminar from luthier Paul Fischer was on Acoustics of the Concert Guitar. As an overview, he cited recent maker-led developments for the guitar, traditionally a salon instrument but now satisfying the demands of the concert hall and recording studio. He provided some illuminating facts: 'Only 5 per cent of string energy converts to sound, with the other 95 per cent of kinetic energy lost in mechanical vibration, friction and heat'; '85 per cent of sound radiates from the soundboard.' He explained that the plate (area) below the soundhole to the bridge is the only effective sound chamber or 'wind pump'. Fischer demonstrated that the bridge needs to be rigid, with tapered 'wings' to avoid losing energy through 'flap'- 'a sound acoustic reason', he added, realising his own pun.

A Latin-influenced recital by Flavio Cucchi on the Saturday evening was embraced enthusiastically by the audience at the Copthorne Orchid Singapore. A powerful and emotive player, he approached Villa-Lobos (*Suite Populaire Brésilienne*) in an aggressive vein, following with *Tres Piezas Latino Americanos* (Brouwer) and Bellinati's *Jongo*. A change of pace came with the delightful suite *Siete canciones Sephardes y danza Hebrea* by the Argentine Oscar Roberto Casares. Cucchi won the crowd's favour with the suite's intriguing variety and folk or 'gitano' appeal. A short contemplative piece by the Croatian Dusan Bogdanovic, *Mysterious Habitats* evoked landscapes and passing clouds. *Electric*



Flavio Cucchi's recital, a full house.



PHOTO: COLIN COOPER

Hucky Eichelmann.

*Suite* by Nuccio D'Angelo, a contemporary suite peppered with *golpes* and *tambor* rhythms again sparked the enthusiasm of the audience, providing a fitting climax to the programme. *Un dia de noviembre* (Brouwer) was a superb encore, drawing strong emotions from the listeners. This was followed by a brilliant rendition of *Prelude No. 1* by Villa-Lobos. It was a marvellous concert performance by a mature artist at the height of his powers. As the promotional blurb so rightly claimed, 'Flavio Cucchi's interpretation is perhaps the best you can think.'

Jorge Morel had the honour of closing the festival at the Victoria Theatre. The first half was ostensibly Morel by Morel. Opening with *Pampero*, he followed with well-known selections, notably *Brazilian Sunrise*, and culminated with his early mentor Pablo Escobar's *Chopi* - a clever imitation of a Paraguayan harp. The second half paid homage to Argentine composers with classic tangos, but the attractive *Milonga del Viento* by Morel provided a welcome fillip. He gathered further momentum with a fine rendition of *La*

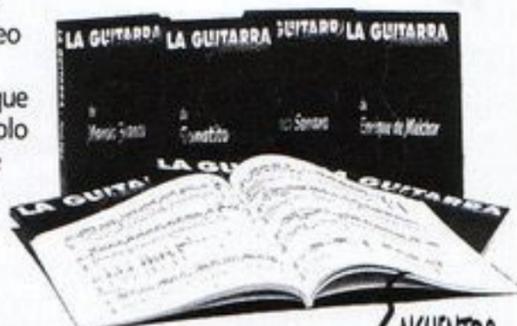


Jorge Morel.

*Trampera* by Anibal Troilo, and the finale, *Taquito Militar* by Mariano Mores, was the highlight of a lion-hearted performance. Encores of *Misionera* and Morel's signature tune *Danza Brasileira*, played with familiar poise and gusto, wrought warm appreciation from the audience - a fitting triumph for this guitarist-composer who has contributed so much to the enjoyment of the guitar. His musical destiny was charted from a young age, but he offered this advice during a festival seminar to budding guitarists: 'We should all have the chance to do what we want. Later we find out if we can'.

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Kazuhito Yamashita.

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