

## **Portland Classic Guitar Series: Isaac Bustos**

*PGS is a sponsor of the Portland Classic Guitar series.*

Portland Classic Guitar is pleased to announce the last concert in the 2011-12 series, featuring Isaac Bustos. Isaac Bustos, who has been hailed by the Oregonian as “Soulful and virtually flawless,” will be performing at 8:00 PM on Friday, June 8th, 2012, at Wiegand Hall, on the beautiful campus of Marylhurst University. A master class is scheduled for the preceding day (Thursday, June 7th) at 7:00 PM, also at Weigand Hall. This concert is in lieu of the Scott Tennant concert, which has been cancelled.

Classical guitarist, pedagogue, and educator Isaac Bustos enjoys an extensive performing career that has taken him to Canada, Central America, Europe, and all over the US. Dr. Bustos has made several radio and television appearances and is in demand to perform in some of the most prestigious festivals such as the Guitar Foundation of America Annual Convention, Portland Guitar Festival, St. Joseph International Guitar Festival, Southwest Guitar Festival, Brownsville Guitar Festival, and many more. Isaac has also appeared as soloist with the Orchestra of New Spain, The Baytown Symphony Orchestra, The Nicaraguan National Symphony Orchestra, and the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Maestro JoAnn Falletta.

Isaac also holds an impressive number of top prizes in over twelve major international competitions, seven of which are first prizes. In the fall of 2008, Isaac released his debut CD titled *Caprichos y Sonatas*, which *Soundboard* magazine described as “...one of the best...it has everything one could want.” In addition, Bustos has performed several premieres of new music for guitar including a sonata commissioned and dedicated to him by renowned American composer Peter Lieuwen.



Isaac holds a Bachelor of Music degree in guitar performance from the University of New Hampshire, where he was the only guitarist to ever hold a full scholarship. He also has both a Master of Music degree and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Texas at Austin under the tutelage of world-renowned American guitarist Adam Holzman. Bustos is also a founding member of and performs regularly with the award-winning Texas Guitar Quartet.

As an educator, his commitment to teaching is reflected in the success of his students who have won prizes in over eight competitions including the Guitar Foundation of America Youth Competition.

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## The Player's Corner: The Journey

by Steve Hawkins

*This is a new feature we're trying out. We'll be inviting a player to write this article for each newsletter. It can be about learning, teaching, performing, gear, or just about anything related to music and the guitar. I've volunteered to be the guinea pig, so here goes.*



In 1966, when I was twelve years old, listening to music was all I wanted to do. Elvis was hot, the Beatles were leading the "British Invasion," and the next generation of Rock music was getting started. I wanted to be one of those musicians on the stage. At first I thought about being a drummer, but my parents didn't take kindly to me playing "Wipeout" with two wooden rulers on the ottoman in the living room.

A friend of mine had a cheap acoustic guitar and I grabbed it one day, started picking randomly on it, and liked the sounds I was making. I cashed in one of my school Savings Bonds and talked my Dad into taking me to the Navy Exchange on the Base. Not having the slightest clue what I was doing, I picked out a very flashy, Japanese-made, electric guitar and paid \$18 for it. I couldn't afford an amp but Dad and I built one out of radio parts.

I asked a guitar player to show me how to tune the guitar, bought a Mel Bay chord book, and started learning songs by listening to records. I eventually started a band with friends at school and our first gig was at the neighborhood Rec Center. For the next 33 years I played lead guitar in various bands, doing covers of all the popular Rock music.

In 1999 I was in one band, auditioning for another, and suddenly decided I was no longer happy playing guitar in bands. I quit, put my guitars in the closet, and started pursuing other interests. A few months later, I was watching TV and channel surfing when I hit the Oregon Public Broadcasting channel and heard the most wonderful music. It was a very tall guy, playing an acoustic guitar, and I loved it. I watched the rest of the show so I could catch the credits and see who the player was. It was a guy I'd never heard of named Doug Smith.

I later found out that a friend of mine was a student of Doug's and that Doug had an opening. One thing that had always frustrated me was not being able to figure out how to play fingerstyle. I just could not get my right hand to do it. So, after three decades of being a self-taught flat-picker, I decided to take my first guitar lesson at the age of 45.

I was a little nervous about it as I don't consider myself to be a musician. I'm a guitar player. I can make music but I don't know anything about it. Doug asked what I wanted to learn, and I explained that I wanted to play fingerstyle. I played some things for him and he said the left hand worked so we would concentrate on my right hand. He taught me the various picking patterns, gave me exercises to train my right hand, and eventually had me learning songs.

Doug made the guitar fun for me to play again. I soon discovered DADGAD tuning, which started me writing my own music and performing again, leading me to record my first CD in 2010. I often wonder what would have happened if I had taken lessons in 1966. "It's never too late" is absolutely true.

## The Background Music Gig

By Ken Ewing

Do you secretly wish you could perform before an audience but find the prospect so scary that you won't even try? Do you like playing for other people but just don't do it very often? Would you like to make a little extra pocket money with your music?



Background music is a way to get yourself out and playing in a less stressful environment. When you play background, you are "heard but not noticed." You provide an ambiance for some other activity. Since you're not in the spotlight, the stress level is lower. You can "make mistakes" and people will not notice. It can help you overcome your anxiety around playing with other people present.

I have played background gigs for over ten years. In this article I will outline my approach.

### Repertoire

I would suggest that you have a minimum of one hour's worth of music prepared. Two hour's worth is better. You don't need to have the music memorized, but it's helpful if it is.

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It's good to have a variety of pieces available. I roughly divide my repertoire by tempo (slow, medium, fast) and major/minor. "Fast" refers more to feel than to a setting on a metronome (that is, some songs have a medium tempo but really "feel" energetic and fast). I try to keep a variety in the order of songs played, avoiding too many in a row of the same tempo or in major or minor keys.

It's also good to have a variety of known pieces mixed with lesser-known ones. Your audience will appreciate it if they recognize some of the tunes you play.

## Equipment

It's best to be as self-sufficient as possible. I always assume that the venue will not have any equipment to borrow, not even an extension cord. I also strive to keep my equipment as simple as possible. Here's the basic set of equipment that I use:

- Guitar (of course)
- Acoustic amp
- Guitar stand
- Bar stool (I bring my own)
- Tip jar (a square glass jar I bought at Kitchen Kaboodle)

I also bring the following small items. These I generally carry in my guitar case, in the amp's carry bag, or in a gig bag that I bought at Office Depot:

- Electronic tuner
- 20-foot extension cord for power
- Patch cords for the guitar and the electronic tuner
- Capo
- Chamois (to drape over my leg so the guitar doesn't slide—I play in classical position)
- Thumbpick (I play a few fingerstyle tunes in Nashville thumbpick style)

I can bring everything from my car into the venue in two trips.

## Program

I've gone back and forth about whether to restrict my song order to a predefined set list. Many times I have planned out set lists in advance and I've never stuck to them at the gig. When I do plan a set list, I try to mix the songs by tempo and major/minor so there is always a variety.

Nowadays I tend to determine my song order on the fly. A lot depends on the atmosphere in the room when I start. If the room starts out quiet and still, I start out with something quiet. I won't play anything energetic until maybe the third or fourth song at least. If the place starts out boisterous and loud, I'll start with something energetic and work in quiet tunes later.

I get an intuitive sense of what song will work next. I still keep in mind the variety of tempo and major/minor as I go. My choice of songs depends a lot on how I read the room during the gig.

## Where to Do It?

Coffeehouses—Oftentimes a little local joint will let you set up and play.

Wedding receptions—If you are involved in a church, you can get an inside track on these events.

Special events—If you are associated with a church or civic group (such as Rotary), you can get connected to banquets, holiday parties, yard parties, etc.

Hospitals—Once a month I play at Doernbecher Children's Hospital as part of the music therapy program for the Children's Cancer Society. This simply consists of setting up in a hallway and playing for an hour (no amp or anything, purely acoustic).

If you're entrepreneurial, you can brainstorm a lot of potential places to play background music. Getting background gigs is a networking activity.

## What to Charge?

I've not done any studies on the going rates for background musicians, but I've been told by other musicians that my rates are about average for Portland. I charge \$100 for the first hour and \$50 for each additional hour.

## What Have I Gotten Out of It?

I started playing background music because I wanted to overcome stage anxiety. It helped in that respect but it did not take it all away. (Not until I did Scott Kritzer's Performance Anxiety Rehab class did I finally make some breakthroughs on stage anxiety.) If you aspire to be a stage performer, playing background music may provide a first step, but you likely will need to leave it behind at some point to truly develop the skills of a stage performer.

I played for three years at Sydney's Café (1800 NW Thurman, Portland) every Friday over lunch hour (12:00 to 1:00). A major goal of mine for this gig was the discipline of having to get up and play every week. This repetitive exposure to playing provided some of my greatest growth, and I believe it has made me a much better player.

If stage performance is not your aspiration, background music can be a very satisfying pursuit. People do pick up on certain pieces and do interact with the performer. And people do truly appreciate the contribution to the ambiance.

*Originally published in the Summer 2008 issue of this publication.*

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## PGS 25th Anniversary Concert

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The Portland Guitar Society is 25 years old this year! As part of the commemoration, the Board is planning celebratory benefit concert on Saturday, October 6 at St. Anne's Chapel, Marylhurst University. The concert will feature the Oregon Guitar Quartet, Doug Smith, Mary Flower, and Peter Zisa. Save the date! More information to come.

## Have Guitar, Will Travel

*by Steve Hawkins*



“Knowledge is power!” – So goes the old saying and it applies to guitars the same as anything else. I can't help but hold an instrument and not want to know everything I can about it. What makes it tick? How do I take care of it and make it fit my style of playing and performance needs? Thanks to the Internet, you can find out almost anything about guitars.

A lot of instrument makers host a discussion forum on their websites or through social media like Facebook. Owners or people just interested in guitars come to these sites to talk about the makers' products and guitars in general. The makers use these discussions for research, marketing, and product feedback. Some makers actively participate; others just provide the venue and study the results. You'll also find guitar discussion forums on the major guitar magazine websites. Type “guitar forums” into a web search engine and you'll get a large list of places to visit.

You can get a lot of good information from these sites, but you can also get a lot of wrong information. It takes time to learn how to tell fact from opinion and, believe me, opinion far outnumbers fact on these sites. Again, knowledge is power!

A luthier is a great source of knowledge and they're more than willing to answer questions, but they're not always available, and their time is too valuable to act like a technical support organization for everyone. So how does an average Joe or Josephine find out what they need to know about how to care for and maximize the performance of their guitar? I typically start with Frets.com (<http://www.frets.com/>).

Luthier Frank Ford of Gryphon Stringed Instruments in Palo Alto, CA runs this site, and it's a goldmine of information. I recommend exploring the entire site. It's well worth the time, and it will help you make informed decisions about your instrument. Frank also has a related discussion forum “Frets.net” (<http://fretsnet.ning.com/>).

While I'm a firm believer in “knowledge is power,” I'm also a firm believer in “knowing just enough to be dangerous.” When it comes to adjusting, modifying, or repairing your instrument, you need to know your limitations. When in doubt, consult a pro!

Now, will someone take pity on a heathen steel-string player and explain to me why, after hundreds of years, we're still tying strings on classical guitars?

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## A Letter from a Long-Time Member

*I was looking through past issues of the PGS Quarterly and found this letter printed in the Spring 2007 issue. This letter was from a long-time member who had moved to Texas.*

Dear Ken,

Thank you for your email message. I have not received a email newsletter since I last paid my dues (last year). However, although my email address remains the same, I am no longer in the Portland area. I moved to Lamesa, Texas at the beginning of December.

I'm not sure how many years I have been a member, but it must be 13 or 14 years. Although I have never performed at a meeting, I thoroughly enjoyed the many meetings I attended over those years and always enjoyed receiving the newsletter.

The last meeting I attended was in September 2006. As I was driving home from that meeting, I began to think about what a privilege it has been to be a member of the Portland Guitar Society. As a member, I have had an opportunity to listen to so many talented musicians over those years as well as the opportunity to see beginners (young and old) grow in their skills. Whether one performs, or watches and listens, he or she cannot help but benefit from the meetings. One of the greatest things about the Society is the treatment given to ALL performers regardless of skill level or genre.

I cannot remember a single time when a performer was given less than strong applause. The willingness of the membership to accept and encourage all performers in a warm and welcoming way is a true gift to the Portland musical community. I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to be a member.

Sincerely,  
Vern Swearingen  
Lamesa, Texas

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## Free Ads

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*These ads are for private parties only (nonbusiness). To place your ad, send it typed, double-spaced to PGS, P.O. Box 15253, Portland, OR, 97293, or email it to [kenewing@aracnet.com](mailto:kenewing@aracnet.com).*

**Looking for a playing partner to play swing jazz for fun.** I've been studying with Pete Krebs for four years and I'm hoping to find someone of similar ability. I use the American songbook and standards as material. Influences are Goodman, Waller, Holiday, and others. Contact [Dorn.Swiger@gmail.com](mailto:Dorn.Swiger@gmail.com).

**Beautiful Handmade Stansell classical guitar.** Yellow Alaskan spruce top. Excellent condition, great tone, easy playability, new hardshell case. Asking \$2000. Contact Rose Okada, 503-296-9650, [rose@kiranawest.com](mailto:rose@kiranawest.com).

**2006 Martin OM-28 Marquis.** Excellent condition. East Indian rosewood back and sides, Adirondack spruce top, ebony fretboard. Built to pre-war specs, sweet and powerful, classic Martin tone, nicely broken in. Geib-style hardshell case. MSRP is \$5299; best advertised price is \$4100; my asking price \$3000. See the following link for pictures and specs (picture shows natural top, mine is sunburst): [elderly.com/new\\_instruments/items/OM28MQ.htm](http://elderly.com/new_instruments/items/OM28MQ.htm). Contact Rick, 503-778-5210, [rickglick@dwt.com](mailto:rickglick@dwt.com).

**2002 Brook 00-12 fret steel-string guitar** handmade in England with Sitka spruce top and Indian rosewood back and sides. Includes Hiscox Liteflite hardshell case, Colorado Case custom insulated case cover, and K&K Pure Western Mini pickup installed. Excellent condition, pictures available. Asking \$2500. Contact Steve Hawkins at 503-645-5459, [stephen.hawkins5@frontier.com](mailto:stephen.hawkins5@frontier.com).



**1997 Milburn Classical Guitar.** East Indian rosewood back and sides and a cedar top. Elaborate floral rosette. French polished throughout. It is in excellent condition with no fingernail marks or dings. \$5000. Contact Charles at [mchrist632@aol.com](mailto:mchrist632@aol.com) or call 503-884-9194.



# Pavane de Spaigne

(Terpsichore, 1612)

Michael Praetorius  
(1571-1621)

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# Calendar

## June 2012

**Monday, June 4, 7:00-9:30 PM**

**PGS Monthly Meeting** at the Community Music Center, 3350 SE Francis, Portland. Featured performer: Scott Kritzer (classical guitar).

**Friday, June 8, 8:00 PM**

**Isaac Bustos classical guitar concert** at Wiegand Hall, Marylhurst University (17600 Pacific Highway—on Highway 43 between West Linn and Lake Oswego). For ticket information, go to [portlandclassiccuitar.com](http://portlandclassiccuitar.com) or call 503-652-1418.

**Thursday, June 7, 7:00 PM**

**Isaac Bustos classical guitar master class.** For ticket information, go to [portlandclassiccuitar.com](http://portlandclassiccuitar.com) or call 503-652-1418.

**Wednesday, June 20, 8:00 PM**

**Muriel Anderson, John Doan—A Harp Guitar Concert** at the Alberta Rose Theater, 3000 NE Alberta St., Portland. Oregon's own John Doan teams up with Muriel Anderson from Nashville for an evening of harp guitar music. Tickets are \$15 advance, \$17 at the door and are available online on [www.albertarosetheatre.com](http://www.albertarosetheatre.com). Doors open at 7:00 PM.

**Saturday, June 23, 7:30 PM**

**Al-Andalus in concert** at the Columbia Center for the Arts, 215 Cascade St., Hood River, OR. Al-Andalus is a world music ensemble including Tarik Banzi (oud) and Julia Banzi (guitar) joined by Charlie Bisharat (violin) along with vocalists and dancers. This is part of the World Music and Dance series sponsored in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. Tickets are \$15 adults, \$12 students/seniors, \$8 children (11 and under) available at the Columbia Center, Waucoma Bookstore (in Hood River), or online (go to [www.columbiaarts.org/](http://www.columbiaarts.org/) and click on the link for the Al-Andalus event). Call 541-387-8877 for information.

## July 2012

**Monday, July 2, 7:00-9:30 PM**

**PGS Monthly Meeting** at the Community Music Center, 3350 SE Francis, Portland. Featured performer: Bass + Mandolin duo with Josh Feinberg (upright bass) and Brian Oberlin (mandolin).

## August 2012

**Monday, August 6, 7:00-9:30 PM**

**PGS Monthly Meeting** at the Community Music Center, 3350 SE Francis, Portland. Featured performer: Duo Rubicund (classical guitar and flute).

## September 2012

**Monday, September 10, 7:00-9:30 PM**

(NOTE: Second Monday of the month)

**PGS Monthly Meeting** at the Community Music Center, 3350 SE Francis, Portland. All open mic (no featured performer).

### The PGS Board:

**President, Treasurer, Special Events:** Ellen Mickanin  
503-642-3786

**Membership:** January Williams  
503-581-4558, [januaryw@gmail.com](mailto:januaryw@gmail.com)

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