

Guitarist at Cohn

The spell of Bonnell

by Eleanor Austin

Halifax hosted one of Europe's leading classical guitarists, Carlos Bonnell at the Cohn Auditorium on Monday, Feb. 12. The performance attuned the listeners ear to well-executed phrasing in Baroque, classical and modern Spanish works. These compositions displayed Bonnell's clean technique and deep feeling for musical interpretation.

Although the **Study** by Hector Villa-Lobos was not sharp and precise enough to awaken the senses, the following **Preludes I and II** demonstrated Bonnell's technical

ability. His agile fingers worked to create a flowing melodious upper line accompanied by a series of plucked notes in the lower register. This combination allowed the listener to envision mysterious images in a relaxed Spanish atmosphere. The final note of the **Prelude II**, sustained with a heavy vibrato that was clean and lasting, reflected Bonnell's control throughout the performance.

The composers of the next two pieces, Leopold Weiss and J.S. Bach, knew each other slightly and both wrote

for the rarely used baroque lute. Bach liked its sound so much that he strung a harpiscord with lute strings, enabling him to play a lute sounding keyboard instrument.

The Weiss compositions were very soothing (so much that a snore was heard from behind). However the technique was not as difficult as that of the first piece. The guitarist's expressive sound possessed a clarinet resonance in the lower notes and that of a mandolin in the upper parts resulting in an effective interchange of conversation.

The **Lute Suite in E Minor** by Bach presented some flawless rendered passages however some fast ones in the first movement sounded slightly muddled. In the other movements, the dynamics and phrasing were expressed well, exposing quick moving inner chromatic rises and offering an enjoyable harp-like sound.

Bonnell, 29, entered the Royal College of Music in England at the age of 17 after being taught by his father. At the College he studied under two of England's most renowned guitarists, John Williams and Stephen Dodgson.

Born in London, Bonnell is well known in English music circles. He has performed with the Hall Orchestra, the City of Birmingham Symphony and many string music ensembles. Bonnell's recordings include flute and guitar duos; trios for flute violin and piano; and a sole album of Spanish music and one of Bach's music.

Upon graduating, Bonnell was appointed a professor at the College where he still teaches. He said that upon entering the College he was already well-versed in the technical side of playing and therefore he concentrated more on interpreting music.

The second half of the program opened with a neo-classical piece by Frank Martin. **Quatre pieces breves** shows the influence of Baroque dance suites on 20th century music. These pieces, with their cadences and short staccato endings, invoked the land of the flamenco in southern Spain. Bonnell exhibited a relaxed air while playing the music of Miguel Llobet—two pieces entitled **Romanza** and **Scherzo**.

The last two pieces of the program, **Granada** and **Asturias** by Albinez, were very well played and thereby ended the concern on an encouraging note.

The poised guitarist was called to play an encore and this brought another climax to the evening. Bonnell used an interesting technique for this piece written by the famous Spanish composer Tarrega. He plucked the melody on the right hand and tapped his left hand on the bridge. It was a waltz-like piece, effective in creating a question-answer dialogue that sounded like bells.

Before leaving Halifax, Bonnell secured a reserved seat for his custom made Fleta guitar on a flight to the USA.

On stage Bonnell is a solitary musician alone with a bench and a foot stand. On Monday the audience was fortunate to be able to retreat with Bonnell into the fascinating realm of his music.



Mildness!

Matinée gives you the right degree.

Warning: Health and Welfare Canada advises that danger to health increases with amount smoked—avoid inhaling. Average per cigarette: King Size: 12mg "tar" 0.8mg nicotine. Regular: 8mg "tar" 0.5mg nicotine.

Kelly's Stereo Marts

CARRYING A COMPLETE LINE OF AUDIO COMPONENTS AND RECORDS TO SUIT EVERYONE'S NEEDS.

