

BLOW YOUR TRUMPET



Classical guitars in Northern Ireland

Robert Cuthbert, Chairman, introduces the Classical Guitar Society of Northern Ireland (CGSNI)



The CGSNI was founded in the 1980s by two adult guitar students who first met at a Protestant-Catholic cross community event. People were encouraged to come simply by homemade posters and ringing around, and word of mouth through the guitar teachers at the School of Music. The first meetings were held in a number of venues in Belfast until the Society settled in the Ulster College of Music in 1996. The Society also created strong links with

enthusiasts in Derry-Londonderry through travelling Belfast teachers, and the support of a professional guitarist.

Today we are a mixed-ability amateur society with around 30 members, and 10-20 or more attending society meetings regularly. Our members range in age between their 20s and 70s, with most in the older bracket. We have skilled tradespeople, doctors, lawyers, teachers, businesspeople, architects - all sorts of professionals, quite a few retirees and some professional musicians as associates. Some members are beginners, or have transferred from acoustic guitar, while some members are grade 8 level and beyond.

Members meet in small groups to try out new pieces and discuss various aspects of performance, and then the whole group meets together for an informal recital.

Performances include solos, duos, trios and occasional larger ensembles. We play predominantly classical music, but the range extends to any music played on the nylon strung Spanish/classical guitar. We have quite an interest in arrangements of the Irish harp music of Turlough O'Carolan, and in contrast we have even been known to play an arrangement of 'Bohemian Rhapsody'!

Planned performances this year at the Ards International Guitar Festival and Belfast City Hospital Arts Care Spring Festival have unfortunately been cancelled due to the coronavirus crisis, but we hope the Derry guitar weekend will go ahead in Bangor in August. In the meantime the Society has set up a WhatsApp group to keep in touch, where at the moment we are discussing the subtleties of the Leo Brouwer studies. **CGSNI.org**