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LETTER FROM NEW YORK

By JULIA CROWE

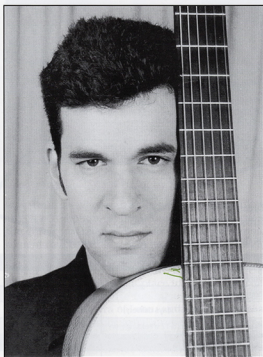
ISRAELI-NATIVE and Manhattan School of Music graduate Nadav Lev debuted at Carnegie Hall this year, demonstrating his musical versatility with a program which included solo pieces and ensemble work with both a soprano and a violinist.

The first half of his programme included Sor's *Fantasie Op. 30*, Manuel de Falla's *Homenaje Le Tombeau de Claude Debussy* (accompanied by Cordelia Hagmann on violin) and Malcolm Arnold's *Fantasy, Op. 107*. As a matter of critique, Lev would have done well to offer either a bow or spoken introduction to his audience since it was assumed he was tuning his guitar when he was actually performing the opening bass notes of the piece.

The second half of his programme revealed the extent of his talent with his performance of Manuel Ponce's *Sonata Mexicana* and later on, two of Villa-Lobos *Etudes* (No. 5 and No.12)—his sensitive and nuanced performance of the Villa-Lobos, in particular, had made it entirely worth missing the opening of the Superbowl XLII with the New York Giants versus the New England Patriots. (This being said, the entire ground floor of Weill Hall was fully packed, with everyone checking game scores on their mobiles at intermission.)

The world premiere of David Homan's *To the Door* seemed a bit out of place within a programme of mostly Spanish, South American and five Sephardic songs, on account of the piece's English lyrics and oblique context. Ruben Seroussi's Sephardic songs (performed here in their U.S. premiere) were lovely and well-balanced in terms of polyphony and harmony. Lev, a former student of Seroussi, gave these two pieces fine introduction and spirited treatment. By comparison, the second set of three Sephardic songs written by Jonathan Keren sounded in moments like practice hall cacophony, given the high-pitched embattling of violin, soprano over an amplified classical guitar in a space like Weill Hall.

Aside from these small details, Lev is clearly a talented and engagingly musical performer when playing both solo and as a chamber musician. And when he gives himself the relaxed moment as he had with introducing his soprano, his stage presence is entirely gracious and personable. (Soprano Alma Moshonov, a superb singer, had limped her way onstage fresh from a car accident yet managed to sing her heart out.) Lev, who currently teaches at the Kaufman Center and the Third Street Music School Settlement in Manhattan, will be touring in Israel with performances of both solo and chamber music. A recital with his Duo Abril



Nadav Lev.

with mezzo soprano Limor Ilan will be broadcast live on Israel's classical radio channel, 'Kol Ha'Musica.' (For more information, visit www.nadavlev.com and soundclips on: <http://www.myspace.com/nadavlev>.)

Seattle-based guitarist Michael Nicolella participated in the New York Guitar Festival with a programme including traditional classical guitar interspersed with modern works on a Fender electric. Nicolella is probably one of the most versatile and virtuosic players within the U.S. if just for his ability to pull off so easily which few cannot: the ability to perform traditional classical guitar with sensitivity and finesse and then switch seamlessly with a modern-adapted ear for lyrical and fascinatingly music on the electric. Sitting through one of his programmes is the musical equivalent of watching the glass phone booth transformation of a nylon-stringed Clark Kent to a plugged-in Superman.

He began his set on a Ruck guitar, closely mics in a small room, and performed his arrangements of Giuliani, followed by four Scarlatti pieces and then a couple of his own compositions, including *Surfacing Through the Mire*. For the second half of his program, he debuted his newly adapted, exquisitely eerie Jacob ter Veldhuis piece on electric guitar