

“Is There Something in the Water?”

Triad-area talented children guitarists win international competitions for the third year. By Kim Horlick-Petty

Five area children trained in classical guitar – *Urja Mittal*, age 11; *Mason Gunyuzlu*, age 11; *Colin Fullerton*, age 11; *William Petty*, age 12; and *David Yarbrough*, age 12; have won first place or runner-up for the third year straight in two international guitar competitions – Columbus State University Guitar Symposium, Columbus, Ga., and the South Carolina Guitar Competition, Columbia, S.C. Together they have won a total of nine awards. All of these children also have the same instructor. With so much young talent in our area, the question was posed by *Francois Fowler, PhD.*, master class instructor at the recent 2003 Columbus State University Guitar Symposium: “Is there something in the water?”

Their instructor, *Patrick Lui*, 37, teaches these students at the Community Music School and Jackson’s Music, both in Winston-Salem. He is also the coordinator of Guitar Studies at Catawba College, Salisbury, and is an accomplished classical concert guitarist who has been teaching since 1985. *Lui* holds a master’s degree from Arizona State University.

“Most college-level guitar programs have guitar pedagogy classes, but none of them prepare a teacher for young children,” says *Lui*. “I had been teaching adults and college level up until 1995. It was then I began teaching a few children in addition to adults. Immediately, I realized I enjoyed teaching children. There was a certain connection between us,” *Lui* explains. I discovered there was no specific ‘system’ one can use in teaching children. I don’t think anybody can ‘teach’ children. One can guide, inspire, excite, and motivate them to bring out their abilities.” *Lui*’s students begin as young as age 6. “The most important thing is for them to have the correct-sized instrument,” he adds.

“As far as the occurrence of these five children winning awards, I have to attribute it not just to the children, but to the parents who are very willing to support them. Without the parents working closely with the children, none of this would be possible. I’ve been lucky that way,” says *Lui*.

When asked to what he attributed this winning phenomenon, *Andrew Zohn, PhD.*, director of the Columbus State University Guitar Symposium, says, “I think that the secret to this success is the combi-

nation of a sound teaching foundation and the positive relationship and influence shared between teacher and student, leading to their desire to improve.” *Zohn* adds, “And of course these students happen to be wonderfully talented.”

Urja Mittal resides in Winston-Salem. She began classical lessons at the age of 8. She was awarded runner-up in the elementary division of the 2003 Columbus State University Guitar Symposium, with a performance of “Rondo, Op. 241, No. 34” by Ferdinando Carulli. *Mittal* has performed as an opening soloist for The Piedmont Guitar Orchestra at Wake Forest University’s Scales Fine Arts Center, Brendle Hall. Her other interests include reading, collecting picture postcards from all over the world and coin collecting. Her future plans include winning first prize in a guitar competition and to become a repeat winner in the spelling bee competition next year.

Mason Gunyuzlu resides in Winston-Salem. He began lessons at the age of 9. He was awarded first place in the elementary division of the 2003 Columbus State University Guitar Symposium. His winning performance was “Rondo Allegretto,” the third movement of “Sonatine” by Mauro Giuliani. He has performed in Friday-at-Five recitals held by the Community Music School and was selected to perform in the school’s “honors” recital, 2002. His other interests include science, math, baseball and Boy Scouts. His future plans include inventing something that will improve the world and becoming an accomplished guitarist.

Colin Fullerton resides in Winston-Salem. He began lessons at the age of 6. He was awarded first place in the elementary division of the 2001 Columbus State University Guitar Symposium at the age of 9. His winning performance was “Maestoso,” the first movement of “Sonatine” by Mauro Giuliani. He also won the elementary division of the 2002 South Carolina Guitar Competition at the age of 10, playing “Rondo Allegretto,” the third movement of “Sonatine” by Mauro Giuliani. Local performances include solos and duets in numerous recitals, including three Community Music School “honors” recitals, the Apple and Irish Festivals at Bethabara Park, and two openers for the Piedmont Guitar Orchestra. His other interests include soccer, cartooning and computer games. His future plans include

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becoming a virtuoso and playing many different types of music, especially rock and-roll.

William Petty resides in Thomasville. He began classical lessons at the age of 8. He was awarded first place in the elementary division of the 2001 South Carolina Guitar Competition, at the age of 10, performing “Minuet in G” by Johann Sebastian Bach and “Mrs. Winters Jump” by John Dowland. He won first place in the elementary division at the 2002 Columbus State University Guitar Symposium at the age of 11, performing “Rondo, Op. 241, No. 34” and “Allegretto” by Ferdinando Carulli. He went back to South Carolina in 2002, advancing to the middle school division, and was awarded runner-up with a performance of “Regis” by Antonio Lauro and “Sounds of Bells” by Joao Guimaraes. This year he again attended the Columbus State University competition, advancing to its middle school division and was awarded runner-up performing “Obstinato,” the second movement of “Elogio de la Danza” by Leo Brouwer and “Candombe en Mi” by Maximo Diego Pujol. His local performances include solos and duets in numerous recitals, including two Community Music School “honors” recitals, the Apple Festival at Bethabara Park, and opening for the Piedmont Guitar Orchestra at Wake Forest University’s Scales Fine Arts Center, Brendle Hall. His other interests include basketball, dirt bikes and computer games. His future plans include becoming an accomplished concert guitarist, scientist and inventor.

David Yarbrough resides in Winston-Salem. He began lessons at the age of 8. He was awarded first place in the middle school division of the 2002 South Carolina Guitar Competition, with his performance of “Sonata No. 2” by Mauro Giuliani. He has performed in various recitals and for the past two years in Forsyth County Middle School’s middle school holiday program where in 2001, he performed a solo of “Welscher Tanz” by Hans Neusidler. In 2002, he performed a duet of “Green-sleeves” with harpist *Katie Pollock*. His other interests include motorcycle racing, cross-country and track, and rock guitar. His future plans include continuing classical guitar training and adding jazz guitar lessons into his schedule.