

By FORRESTER WHITE H-T Intern

GuitarSarasota started as a group of classical guitar enthusiasts and aficionados meeting in each other's living rooms to discuss and listen to their beloved instrument over a glass of wine.

Since then, the group has grown into a nonprofit organization with around 75 members.

GuitarSarasota will host its first meeting of the season from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Monday at the Sarasota Arts Center, 707 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota.

The meetings are open to the public and begin with a mini-recital by various artists.

This month's artist is Marc Mannino, head of the Jazz Department at State College of Florida. Mannino's focus will be demonstrating how the traditional classical guitar technique can be applied to other musical styles as well as electrical and steel guitars.

The organization's primary mission is to create public awareness of the classical guitar.

The founding president, Thomas Koch, said he believes the guitar has two levels of audiences – one a more raucous and entertainment-driven group and the other a more obscure audience that enjoys the intimacy and depth of the classical guitar.

Through the organization's monthly meetings and concerts, Koch wants to raise awareness of the guitar's lesser-known role in music as a solo and chamber instrument.

Koch said there are a large variety of people who attend the monthly concerts, coming from across the area, some from as far away as Orlando. All age groups are represented.

The only defining characteristic is that all those attending have a profound appreciation for the classical guitar.

The instrument attracts a very specific audience, Koch said, and the concerts are unlike others, in that one must pay close attention to the instrument. GuitarSarasota's audiences are very attentive to the music, he said.

GuitarSarasota meetings are the second Monday of every month in the season. The meetings generally include an informative lecture and discourse on the classical guitar.

As well as the monthly meetings and concerts, GuitarSarasota also invites master class classical guitar instructors from around the world to come to Sarasota and teach classes. Students at the high school and college levels have studied with instructors from institutions such as the Manhattan School of Music, the Cleveland Institute of Music, Chicago College of the Performing Arts at Roosevelt University and the Hoshchule fur Musik Weimar in Germany.

GuitarSarasota has been sponsoring concerts with artists from around the globe since 2006. The first concert this season will be in January. For more information about the group, visit [www.guitarsarasota.org](http://www.guitarsarasota.org).

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