



*2020-2021 MEMBERSHIP
SURVEY: REPORT TO
MEMBERS – AUGUST,
2021*

*Classical Guitar Society of
Upstate New York*

OVERVIEW

To help ensure CGSUNY is responsive to the needs and interests of members, the Board of Directors conducted an on-line survey to hear directly from members about the types of activities and resources they would like to see CGSUNY sponsor, offer, or support. A key purpose of the survey was to provide information that would help guide the Board in decisions about CGSUNY activities now and in the future. This report presents the findings of the survey, based on the 31 respondents (57% of all members) who participated in the survey, along with recommendations and next steps.

**Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York
Report to the Members on the 2020-21 Membership Survey¹**

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¹ The survey was a volunteer effort on the part of the board of directors and members of CGSUNY participated on a voluntary basis. No CGSUNY or other funding was used to conduct the survey or prepare the report. The survey effort was led by Donna Noyes-Grosser (dngrosser@gmail.com) in conjunction with the board of the Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York. Questions about the survey procedures, data and the report should be directed to dngrosser@gmail.com. Questions about CGSUNY should be directed to Paul Sweeny at bpsimplegifts@earthlink.net.

Background

The Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York (CGSUNY) is a membership not-for-profit corporation (Type B), incorporated in the county of Delaware in July, 2001. The purpose of CGSUNY, as stated in its certificate of incorporation, is:

“to promote the education, appreciation, and cultural awareness of the classical guitar and other associated instruments as a not-for-profit presenting arts organization in New York State.”

Membership in CGSUNY is on an annual basis, and any resident of New York State can become and renew membership in CGSUNY through payment of annual dues. For operational purposes, including payment of dues, CGSUNY’s year is defined as October 1st – September 30th. Dues for the upcoming membership year are payable as of October 1st of the year and must be paid by CGSUNY’s annual meeting, convened no later than October 31st of the operational year. Dues are established by the CGSUNY Board of Directors and include separate fees for adults, students, and families.

CGSUNY’s Board of Directors is comprised of four officers (president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary) and five additional members. The Board is elected annually by members of the organization, through a nomination and voting process held in conjunction with the annual meeting. All members in good standing are eligible to be nominated, elected, and serve on the Board.

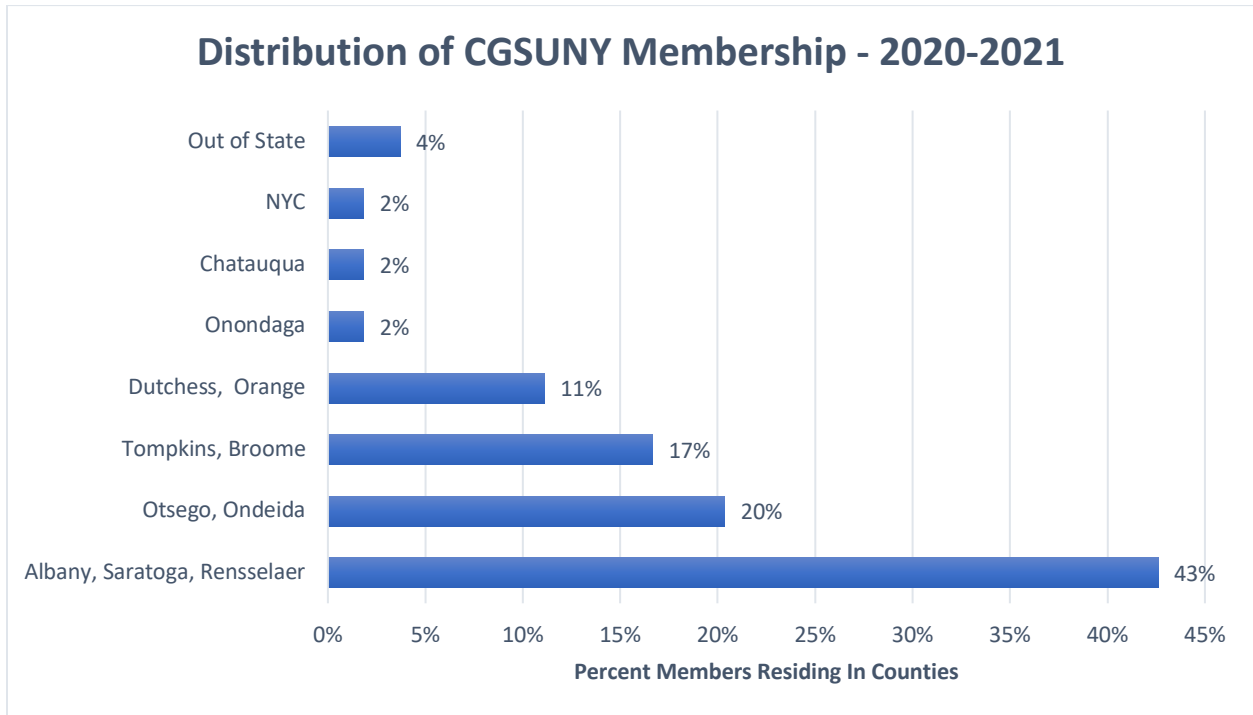
For the past twenty years, a highlight of CGSUNY’s activities has been the annual Classical Guitar Fest, typically held in October of each year in conjunction with the annual meeting. A two-day event, the annual Guitar Fest provides members with an opportunity to perform for each other and features concerts by internationally-known guitarists and accomplished regional musicians. The Guitar Fest also includes collegiate recitals performed by students in NYS schools of music. Master classes with featured guitarists are also offered as part of the annual Guitar Fest.

In 2020, as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic, the CGSUNY Board worked together to find ways to continue to fulfill its purpose through new approaches to member services. The CGSUNY Guitar Fest was held virtually via Zoom on October 17th and 18th, and many members participated as performers. CGSUNY President Paul Sweeney collaborated with past Guitar Fest featured guitarist to present a stellar evening of virtual performances on October 17th and arranged for virtual performances by collegiate guitarists on October 18th.

Following the virtual Guitar Fest, CGSUNY began hosting monthly virtual soirees for members and invited guests, providing opportunities for members to perform and engage in classical guitar music together from their own homes through Zoom.

CGSUNY also maintains a website (<https://www.cgsuny.org>), and issues newsletters and bulletins, highlighting CGSUNY activities and information and resources for members.

Most members of CGSUNY reside in Upstate New York, with a few members residing Downstate New York or in another state. The following shows membership distribution for the 2020-2021 membership year.



| | |
|------------------------------|------|
| Albany, Saratoga, Rensselaer | N=23 |
| Otsego, Oneida | N=11 |
| Onondaga | N=1 |
| Tompkins, Broome | N=9 |
| Dutchess, Orange | N=6 |
| Chatauqua | N=1 |
| NYC | N=1 |
| Out of State | N=2 |
| Total Members | N=54 |

2020-21 Membership Survey

To help ensure CGSUNY is responsive to the needs and interests of members, the Board of Directors conducted an on-line survey to hear directly from members about the types of activities and resources they would like to see CGSUNY sponsor, offer, or support. A key purpose of the survey was to provide information that would help guide the Board in decisions about CGSUNY activities now and in the future. The survey was conducted using Google Forms and was emailed to all CGSUNY members on March 9, 2021. The survey was open to member responses through March 28, 2021.

A total of 31 members, representing 57% of CGSUNY members in the 2020-21 membership year, responded to the Membership Survey. The level of response to the CGSUNY Survey was excellent, reflecting a high level of interest on the part of membership in the types of activities and resources members would like to see CGSUNY sponsor, offer, or support. This report presents the findings of the survey, based on the 31 members who participated in the survey, along with recommendations and next steps.

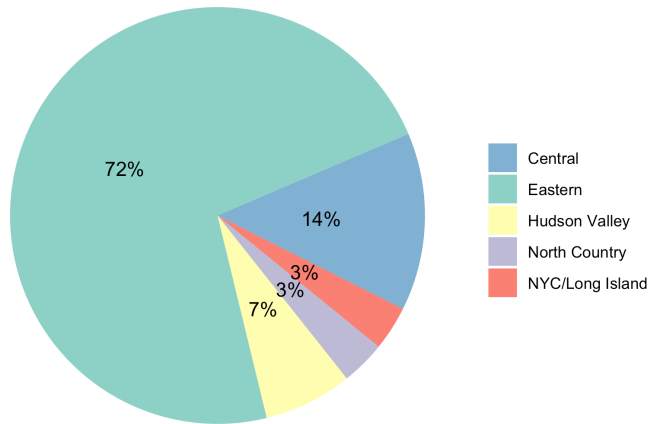
Survey Results

Demographics

We asked members participating in the survey to provide us with some basic information about themselves, including their age, region of residence, length of membership in CGSUNY, and instruments (including voice) they play. Questions included categorical and open-ended responses.

Region of Residence –

Figure 1: Members were asked to indicate in what region of New York State they reside (Figure 1). Of the twenty-nine members who responded to this question, most reside in Eastern NY (N=21), with 4 (14%) members residing in Central NY and a few members in each of the other regions.² One respondent to the survey resides out-of-state.



² Regions were defined as follows (based on the NYS Education Department’s definition): **Central Region:** Counties of Broome, Cayuga, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga, Schuyler, Seneca, Tioga, Tompkins, and Wayne; **Eastern Region:** Counties of Albany, Columbia, Delaware, Fulton, Greene, Montgomery, Otsego, Rensselaer, Saratoga; **Hudson Valley:** Counties of Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Westchester; **NYC/Long Island:** Bronx, Kings, Queens, New York, Staten Island, Nassau, Suffolk); **North Country:** Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida, Oswego, St. Lawrence; and, **Western Region:** Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Ontario, Orleans, Steuben, Wyoming, Yates).

Figure 2 - Age of Members: Members were asked to indicate their age (Figure 2). Most respondents were 51 years of age or older, followed by members between the ages of 26-50 years, with few participants under the age of 18.

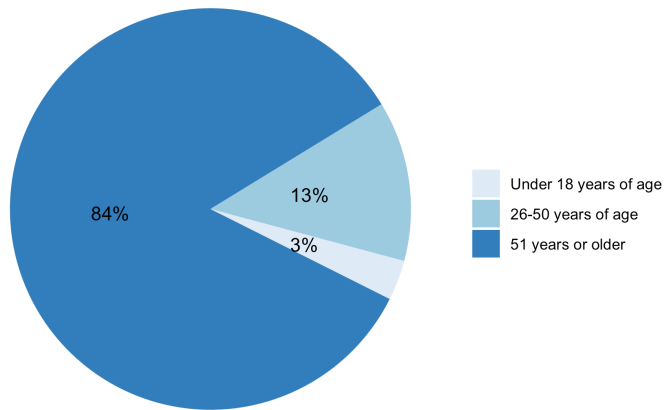
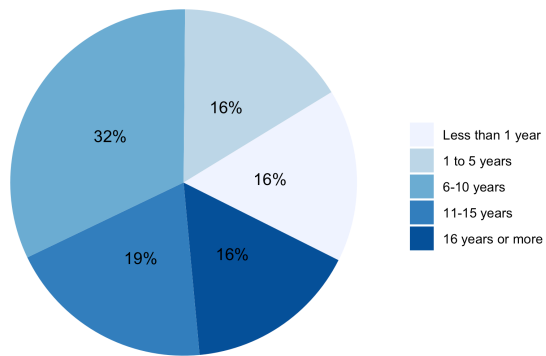


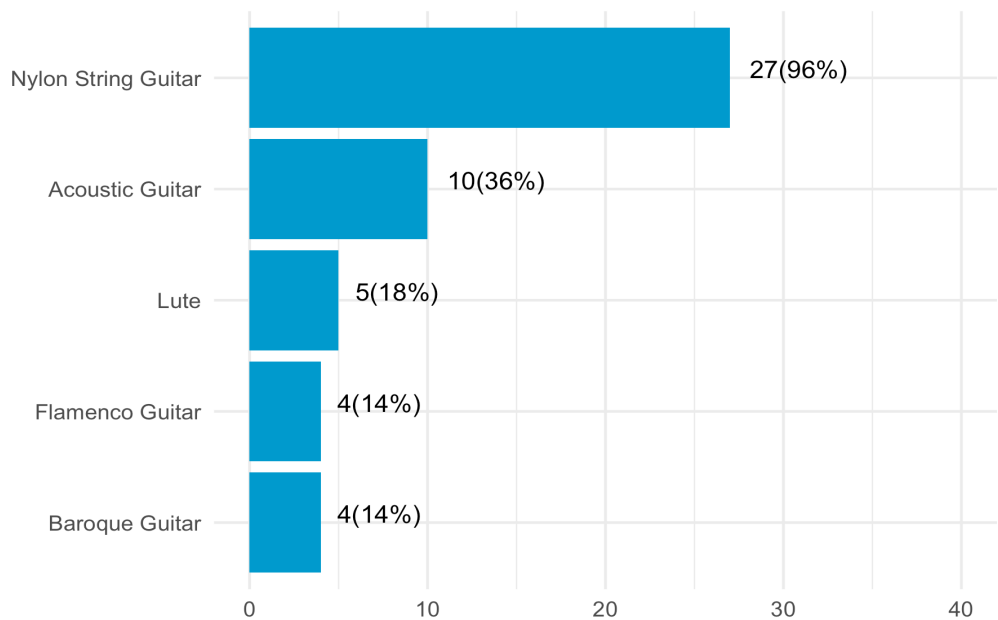
Figure 3 -Length of Membership: Members were asked to indicate how long they have been a member of CGSUNY. About one-third of respondents had been a member for between 10 and 16 years, with other respondents distributed across the other categories.



Type of CGSUNY Membership: Members were also asked to indicate their type of membership this year (Individual Adult, Family, Student, or Gift). Of those responding to the survey, 26 members (81%) had an individual adult membership, 4 (12%) were members who received a gift membership from another member, with 1 each having a student or family membership.

Figure 4 - Type of Instruments

Members were asked to tell us about the instruments they play. Virtually all members play classical/nylon string guitar, with several members also reporting they play acoustic, flamenco, or baroque guitar or lute.



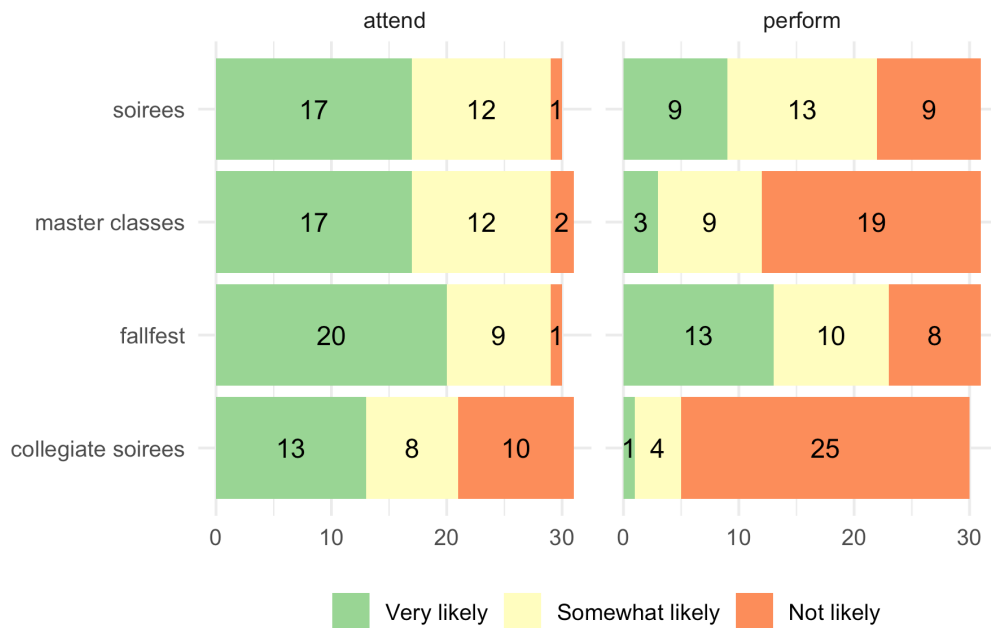
Members were asked an open-ended question about other instruments they play, yielding the following responses:

- Folk and popular
- Voice
- Electric/jazz guitar
- Piano, flute
- I am an observer and listener. I do not play any instrument well, but like to sing
- Novice; Classical guitar & voice untrained post-secondary chorus
- charango
- Electric bass, piano, viola
- Voice it is (he yodeled)
- Charango
- Anything with frets and strings; piano and voice
- 6 steel string, 12 string, nylon, electric 6 & 12, bass, uke, autoharp. My vocal range is contralto.
- I also play bit of banjo and mandolin

CGSUNY Activities and Resources

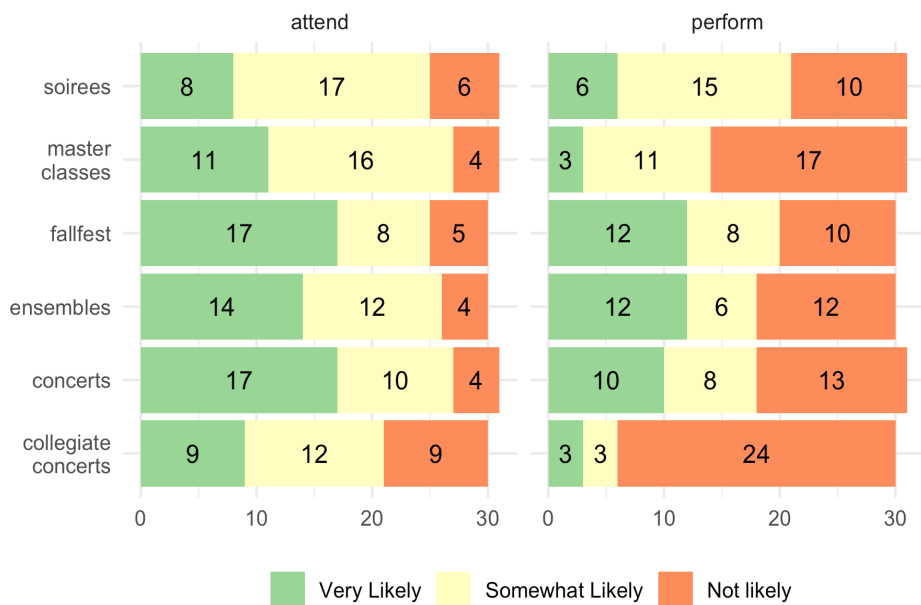
The primary focus of the membership survey was on the types of activities and resources participants were interested in having CGSUNY sponsor, offer, or support. Because this survey was conducted during the COVID 19 pandemic, participants were asked to respond to questions about both the types of Virtual/On-line events and in-person events of interest. First, members were asked how likely they would be to participate in monthly soirees, master classes, the Fall Fest, and collegiate soirees as either observers (Attend) or as performers (Perform). Figure 6 presents the number of members who were likely, somewhat likely, or not at all likely to attend or perform in these types of on-line events.

Figure 6 – Number of Members Likely to Attend as Observer or Perform in CGSUNY Virtual Events



Next, members were asked how likely they would be to attend as observers (Attend) or perform (Perform) in the following events if sponsored by CGSUNY as live/in-person events (post-pandemic): monthly soirees, CGSUNY annual Fall Fest, regional member concerts, ensembles, collegiate concerts, and master classes. The number of members who responded that they were likely to attend or perform in CGSUNY live/in-person events is presented in Figure 7. While the question posed to respondents was specific to live events to be scheduled post-pandemic, since the survey was conducted in March, 2020, members' responses to the question about likelihood to attend live-in person events may have been influenced by the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic.

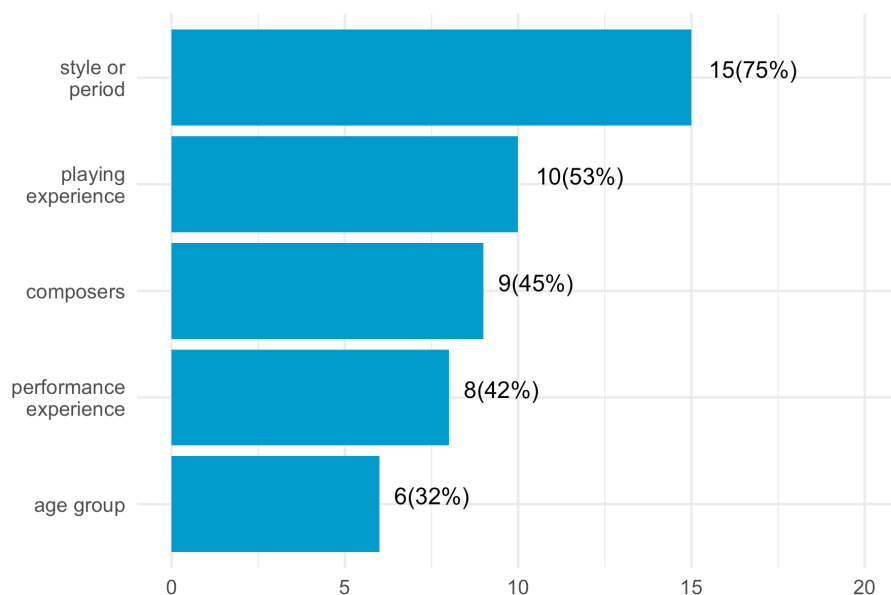
Figure 7 – Number of Members Likely to Attend as Observer or Perform In CGSUNY Live/In-Person Events



The CGSUNY Board is interested in finding ways to support and encourage performances by members and guests at soirees. To that end, we asked members to tell us whether they thought it would be helpful to organize some of the soirees by one or more themes, such as by age, style or period of music (such as early music, contemporary music, flamenco, etc.), playing experience, performance experience, or other.

Figure 8 presents the number and percent of respondents by theme.

Figure 8 – Number and Percent of Members Responding Soiree Themes would be Helpful



In response to the category “Other”, the following comments were offered by individual respondents:

- Age or experience should not matter
- Geographic region
- I don't think that a segregated soiree would work or is a good idea
- I kind of like a mix of all these. As far as age group, most of our members/attendees are of retirement age, anyway
- I liked it when the member soiree was near the beginning of the weekend
- I would prefer all levels, styles and ages to perform at each soiree
- Keep current format with no restrictions
- No separation - like the variation
- Small core group - while it might be less threatening to perform with those of similar skill it could lead to a division among members which would be unfortunate. Broad representation of music, composers, age is preferable
- Soirees should be wide open to all categories

We asked members who are instructors to indicate whether they would be interested in performance opportunities for their students. Most respondents (67%, N=20) indicated that this question was not applicable to them. Among those respondents who are instructors, most were interested in performance opportunities for their students with 7 responding “yes”, 2 responding “No”, and 1 responding “maybe” to the question.

Member Suggestions for CGSUNY Services/Events

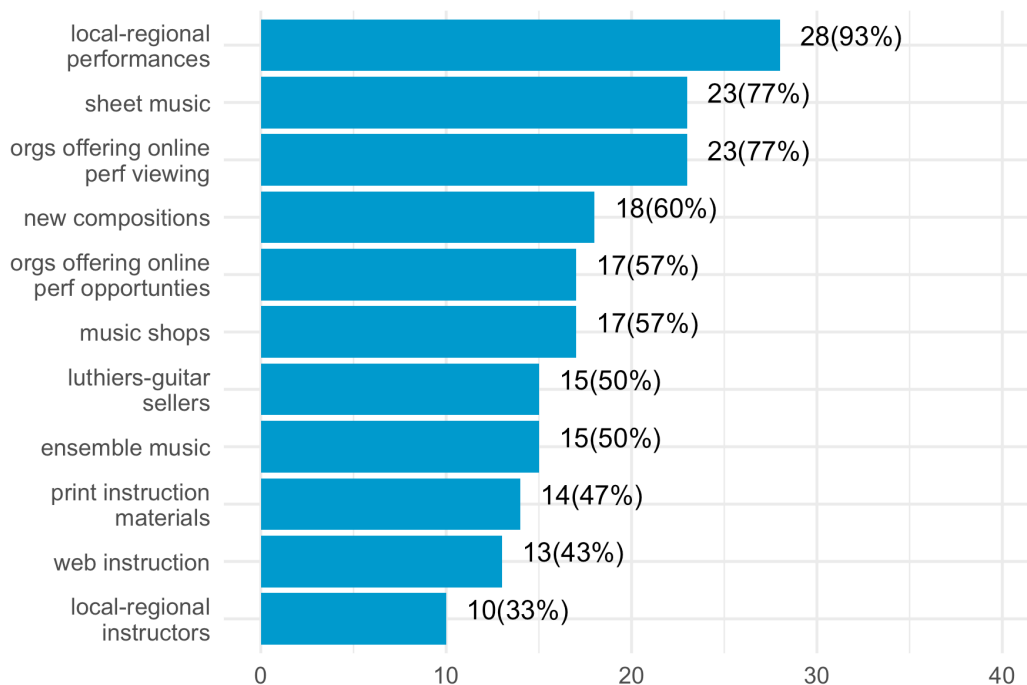
Members were also asked for their suggestions for the types of services and events, either on-line or in person, that CGSUNY should consider offering. Eighteen members contributed suggestions for consideration for future services and events. The following are suggestions made by members participating in the survey for services and events that could be offered by CGSUNY.

- Sharing info about ergonomics of playing, info. on approachable repertoire for the average player, opinion pieces on topics for non-professionals
- Allow non-professionals who frequently perform to participate in outside events like Unadilla.
- Gohar type estudio performances in u tube or zoom format.
- The array of possibilities is certainly ample as is. I think the geographic challenge, given the size of the region covered, is the most pressing concern. On-line events help with this a great deal. So, a combination of more diverse locations, combined with on-line events, could encourage participation.
- I would like to see some "play along" opportunities. Send duet parts out to interested members and one player play on Zoom while others play the same or the duet part at home. The at home players could probably record both parts to hear how they sound.
- Sunday at 4pm is Family dinner time, I have a good sized family.
- Besides what is already on the table, maybe allowing some younger students the opportunity to perform in front of the group, either remotely or in person, would give them something to aim for, besides their usual recitals.
- Lectures, master classes and performers
- It might be interesting to have some virtual "meet the performer" hours. Some of the other classical guitar societies are offering these, they are an interesting way to learn about the experiences of high-level performers.
- If any sort of specialty group is desired, contact and sign-up could take place on website.
- Forums for discussing or chatting about matters that might be of general interest to members regardless of ability or experience. For example, there is a bewildering of strings on the market today. What have been members' experiences with the various types and brands--what works best on individual instruments or in different settings; how well do some types hold up, and under what kind of playing; are the more expensive strings worth the difference in price (which can be considerable) compared to the more commonly used brands and types? Another subject might be humidifying devices and how well particular types work (or not). Or how to ensure a guitar stays safe when traveling through different climates and environments.
- Educational outreach in classrooms of schools at every level.
- Discounted tickets to in-person concerts where the guitar is the primary focus to support other presenting organizations and venues.
- More lectures/masterclasses.
- Sharing info about ergonomics of playing, info. on approachable repertoire for the average player, opinion pieces on topics for non-professionals.

CGSUNY Information and Resources

In this section of the survey, members were asked to respond to questions about the types of information and resources they were interested in hearing about through CGSUNY. First, members were asked to check all the types of information and resources that they would be interested in learning about through CGSUNY from the following list: venues/Organizations offering online performances for viewing; venues/Organizations offering online performance opportunities (such as virtual guitar orchestras, master classes; local/regional guitar performances; local/regional guitar instructors; web-based instructional resources; print instructional resources; sheet music for guitar; new compositions for guitar; music for guitar ensembles; music shops for strings and other accessories; and, luthier/guitar sellers. Figure 9 presents the number and percent of members interested in learning about these various types of information through CGSUNY.

Figure 9 – Number and Percent of Members Reporting Interest in Guitar Information and Resources



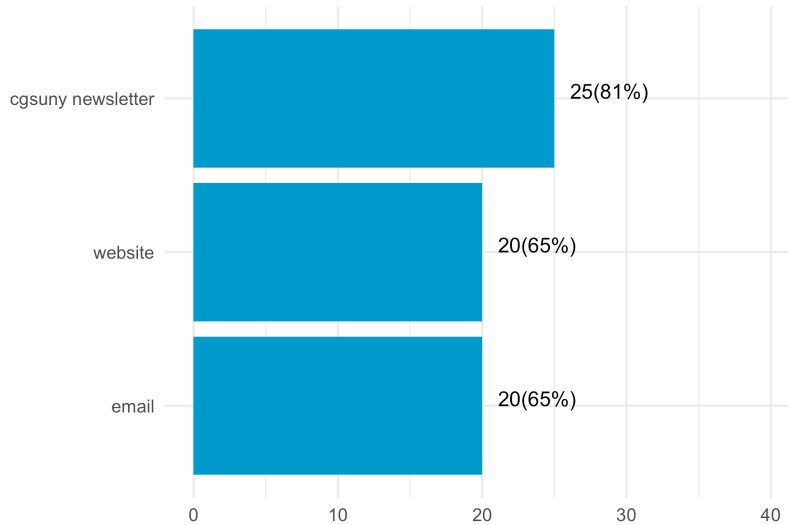
Members participating in the survey were also asked whether there were other types of information and resources they would be interested in learning about through CGSUNY. The following comments were made by members:

- The history of CGSUNY.
- Foundations of Music Teaching (i.e., classroom management, learning styles, how to communicate effectively to students in different age ranges, cognition of different age ranges, etc.
- All of the above, none are critical.

- Lectures about the guitar.

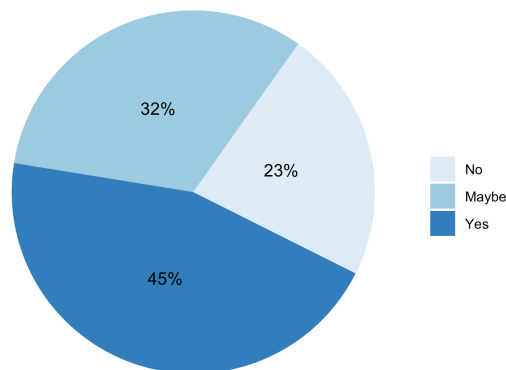
We asked if members would be interested in receiving or accessing these types of information through CGSUNY via the CGSUNY website, newsletters, email, or in other ways. Members were asked to check all that apply. Although an “other” response category was included, no other suggestions were made by members.

Figure 10 – Number and Percent of Members Interested in Receiving Information by Method



We also asked members whether they would be interested in participating in an on-line forum via the CGSUNY website and to provide suggestions for topics.

Figure 11 – Percent of Members Interested in Participating in On-line Community Forums



The following suggestions were made for possible topics for On-line Forums:

- Practice techniques, repertoire and its history
- Performances, guitar equipment (e.g. strings, mics, etc)
- Guitar construction trends, amplification suggestions, alexander technique, playing injuries etc
- Guitarists are always interested in suggestions to improve practice (like tremolo), experiences with different types of strings, what people are playing currently, concerts people have recently attended, books about well-known performers (e.g. I highly recommend Pablo Casals book Joys and Sorrows, written in the first person and organized by the author), burn out during practice, etc.
- Shaping music, resources (guitars for sale, luthiers especially local luthiers,
- strategies to boost participation)
- Maintenance, guitar care, choosing pieces
- Techniques for classical guitar
- Discussion of pieces we're playing and the joys and challenges in them

Outreach and Guitar Education

The CGSUNY Board, consistent with the organization's purpose to promote the education, appreciation, and cultural awareness of the classical guitar and associated, asked members for their thoughts on how CGSUNY can engage young people and promote guitar education. To that end, we asked members for suggestions about activities, resources, or services that might help us engage more young people in our organization. The following suggestions were provided by 19 members responding to this question:

- Support other guitar styles occasionally. For example, finger style steel string, flamenco (of course), flatpickers. Classical only is too limited in scope and interest.
- More masterclasses.
- Performance opportunities for young performers.
- Contact local classical guitar teachers; offer 1-year memberships gratis to younger students; or, offer student level membership; provide young student (elementary & secondary level) performance opportunity at annual meeting or other member programs.
- I think we need to identify and involve more instructors and their students. I can think of a number of instructors who have minimal involvement in CGSUNY. We need to find out what their needs and concerns are and go from there.
- We could be doing more outreach to music programs, especially at the collegiate level, to inform them about CGSUNY and opportunities for young guitarists, e.g., we could organize a soiree that features collegiate players.
- Send information to colleges that have guitar classes or programs encouraging them to become members.
- Go into schools and perform for the kids
- As I mentioned above, perhaps allowing a space for them to perform other than the regular recitals, even mentoring individual students who would like someone besides their teacher to talk "guitar" with and encourage them.
- Play on your porch, Saturday afternoons

- Showcase guitar ensemble arrangements of contemporary pop, rock songs
- A grandkids club. Kids showing off their chops.
- Honest encouragement is important.
- Participation opportunities around the geographic area covered by CGSUNY as well as online opportunities.
- Open Mike Night
- Newspaper and Facebook publicity

In addition, we asked members for suggestions for ways CGSUNY can support guitar education in their communities. The following suggestions were provided by 16 members responding to this question:

- Perhaps offer workshops by regional guitar instructors.
- More masterclasses by board members and by regional artists
- More public performances once they are permitted.
- One idea would be to identify local organizations/studios/instructors that offer music lessons to youth and see if there are ways members of CGSUNY can collaborate to promote guitar instruction. We could post (with permission) information about how to contact/what these community organizations would like to collaborate with CGSUNY.
- Do clinics in middle and high schools that guitar classes.
- Set up community guitar classes for a nominal fee by age group.
- Make sure local concerts are advertised, both in print and on local radio stations.
- If CGSUNY has a competition winner, they can send them on a "mini tour" to do outreach in NYC schools through guitar education organizations.
- Engage teachers in cooperative events sponsored by CGSUNY. Perhaps teachers or colleges could include a performance/participation requirement for their students which in turn includes playing programs at various locations throughout CGSUNY. This could enhance be an enhancement of the students' performance experience.
- College events.
- Question and answer format for the website or newsletter.

Membership Directory

We asked members about their interest in a CGSUNY membership directory. We also asked members about the types of information that should be included in a Membership Directory. Results are presented in figures 12 and 13 below.

Figure 12 – Percent of Members Interested in A Membership Directory

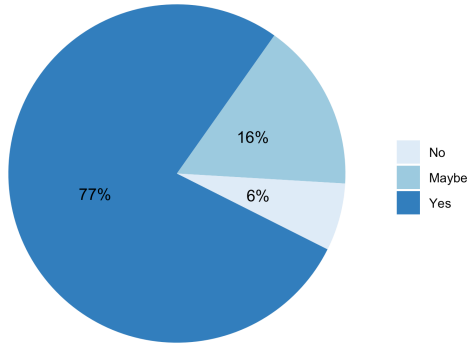
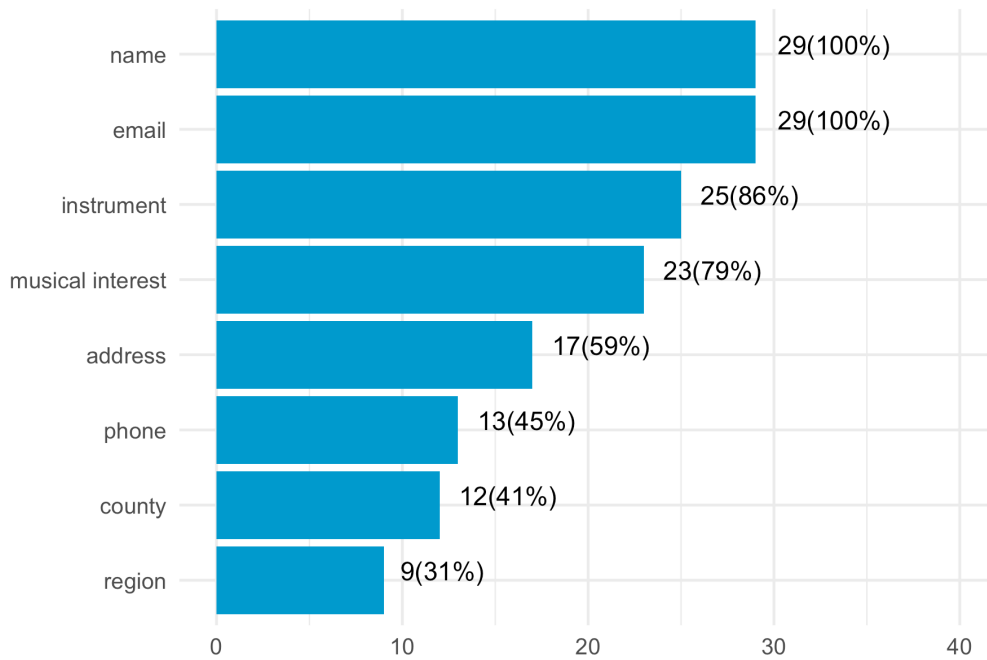


Figure 13 – Number and Percent of Members Reporting Information to Include in Membership Directory



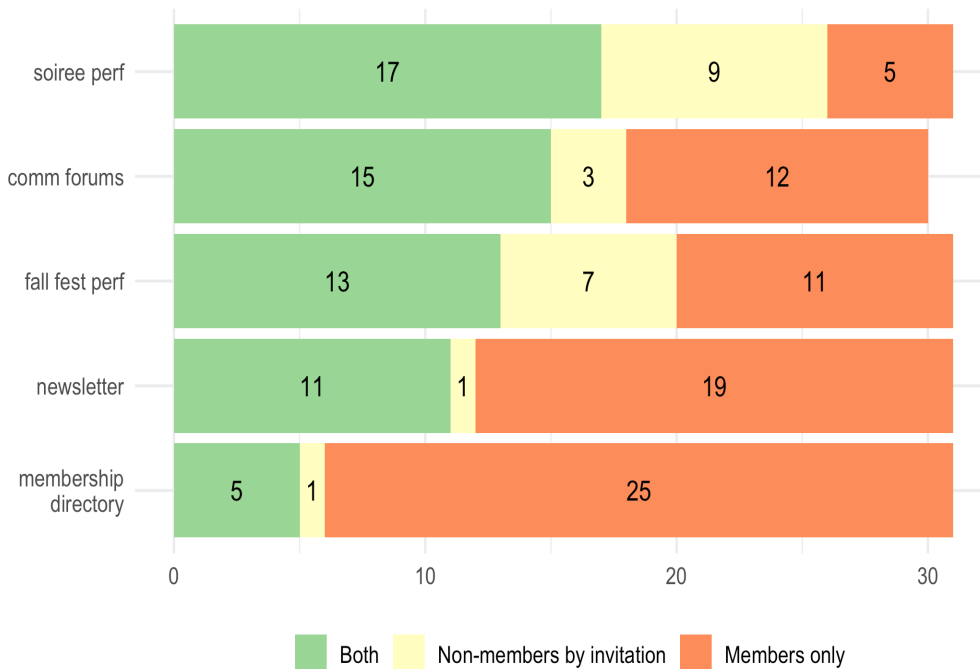
The following suggestions were made by 15 respondents about information to include in a membership directory:

- Professional website
- Musical background or training
- If member prefers to not list specific details - OK; how many years a member of CGSUNY - or, Member since
- Social Media Accounts
- Number of years playing
- A membership directory should be that and not be a compilation of lengthy individual resumes
- It might be nice to give members the opportunity to include a paragraph in the directory with information about their guitar/music experiences/interests
- Possibly age range 0-10, 10-20, 20-40, 40- forever
- Allow members to limit information provided based on personal preference or requirements

Membership Benefits

We asked members to provide their opinion about whether certain events/resources should be available to CGSUNY members only, non-members, or both: Performance opportunities at soirees; performance opportunities at the annual Fall Fest, newsletters, membership directory, and online forums.

Figure 14 – Number of Repondents Indicating Events/Resources Should Be Available to Members only, Non-members by Invitation, or Both Members and Non-members



CGSUNY Virtual Fall Fest, October 17-18, 2020

Finally, we asked members about whether they participated in the CGSUNY Virtual Fall Fest, either at the time of the event or through later viewing of performances posted on the CGSUNY Website and YouTube channel. Of those responding to the survey, 53% of members had participated in the CGSUNY Fall Fest in real time or viewed the performances on-line after the Fest. Members who attended or later watched the CGSUNY Virtual Guitar Festival provided the following feedback about the festival:

- It was a great virtual festival
- Many nice performances but live/in-person performance will never be replaced by ZOOM.
- Things worked amazingly well (thanks to Eric Sheffield). The Board adapted impressively to the situation.
- Went well for an online event. But hoping we will be back in person next fall.
- I thought it was very well done, especially for the first virtual effort. All the performances were great and I especially liked the Saturday evening event.
- It was fun to hear performers from past years to see how the organization has grown.
- It was what it was.
- I was happy to be able to do it remotely. I don't remember a lot about it now, however.
- I watched most of the members play and some of the performers. There's so much performer material available online that can hear/watch it anytime so no need to watch that in the limited time of the FF. I would have liked some classes. Especially demonstrations or masterclass format for SHAPING MUSIC Writing music, Developing a melody line into a harmonized piece.
- It was my introduction to CGSUNY I liked it!
- Very good considering the circumstances and media limitations.
- Very low-key and relaxed
- Loved the performances - like in person better
- It was excellent!! Particularly enjoyed the return of our former featured performers and the computer/sound skill that made it all go smoothly

Conclusion and Next Steps

The 2020-21 Membership Survey was a first-time effort by the CGSUNY Board to invite all current CGSUNY members to participate in a survey about the types of activities and resources members would like to see CGSUNY sponsor, offer, or support. We wish to take this opportunity to thank all members for their time and effort to participate in our survey.

The excellent participation by members (57%) and quality of their responses is indicative of a membership devoted and committed to the promotion of the classical guitar and other associated instruments. Members responding to the survey showed a high level of interest in a range of activities, events, and resources that will help guide future CGSUNY efforts to meet member needs and fulfill its purpose to promote the education, appreciation, and cultural awareness of the classical guitar and other associated instruments as a not-for-profit presenting arts organization in New York State.

The following are broad conclusions, along with recommended next steps:

- Demographics of membership: the vast majority of CGSUNY members are over the age of 50 and most reside in counties in the Eastern region of New York State. It may be worthwhile to consider establishing a Membership committee, comprised of members representatives of different regions and age groups, that can work on ways to promote awareness about and interest in CGSUNY membership to broaden and expand the membership. Involvement of academic institutions, professional guitarists, and guitar instructors may be an example of one outreach strategy.
- There was interest among the members in both the virtual and in-person/live events, including soirees, the Fall Fest, and master classes. The survey was conducted in March, 2020, and responses by members indicated a higher likelihood of attending or performing at virtual events. Although the virtual events were an innovation forced by the COVID 19 pandemic, there continues to be a high level of interest in virtual events. For the immediate future, CGSUNY will continue to sponsor virtual events for its membership, while also resuming and initiating opportunities for live/in-person events. In addition, in the long-term, continuation of some virtual events, such as monthly soirees, may provide more opportunity for member participation and should be considered.
- The monthly soirees CGSUNY, which offer members an opportunity to attend either as observers or performers, have been well-attended and responses to the survey show a high level of interest in these events among members. Many members expressed interest in adding some variety to the format and content of the soirees. For example, a number of members were interested in having some of the soirees focused on style or period of music, particular composers, or level of playing experience. CGSUNY will consider including some soirees with a particular focus, as part of its ongoing monthly soirees.
- Members expressed strong interest in a wide variety information and resources for guitarists (such as information about local/regional guitar performances, sheet music, virtual performances, music shops, instruction, etc.) Most members wanted to receive this information via the CGSUNY newsletter, website, or email. Similarly, there was a high level of interest among members in community forums on the guitar and associated

topics. CGSUNY will be reformulating its newsletter and continuing to improve upon its website to enhance the scope of information provided to members through these resources. CGSUNY will be exploring ways to sponsor or host virtual and in-person community forums on guitar-related topics. A committee may be formed, comprised of interested members from different regions, to help with this effort.

- Results from the survey will be used to inform CGSUNY plans to sponsor concerts and lectures geared toward members' interests and requests.
- Combined, 93% of members participating in the survey were interested (77%) or might be interested (16%) in a membership directory. CGSUNY will be producing a Membership Directory for the 2021-2022 membership year. A committee may be formed, comprised of interested members from different regions, to help with this effort. The membership directory will also be a valuable resource in planning CGSUNY in-person and virtual events, by engaging members of the society in organizing and representing CGSUNY at sponsored events.
- When asked about whether certain events and resources should be available to members only, non-members, or non-members *by invitation*, the vast majority of members were of the opinion that a membership directory and newsletter should be reserved as a benefit for members only. With respect to performances in soirees, participation in virtual community forums, and Fall Fest performance opportunities, the results were more mixed, with members split between reserving these opportunities for members only, or both members and non-members with by invitation. For now, CGSUNY will continue to reserve the newsletter and a membership directory for members only and to have soiree performance opportunities available to members and non-members by invitation. As plans are made for possible virtual community forums and the Fall Fest, consideration will be given to the level of access to these events.
- There were a number of insightful and thoughtful responses to the open-ended questions about ways CGSUNY can promote outreach and guitar education, in upstate New York and in members' local communities. In addition to the information included in this report, CGSUNY will explore ways to work with members to share these suggestions and find ways to support and sponsor activities and events to engage young people and guitarists of all ages and promote guitar education.