ForeWord Reviews

GENERAL

The Guitar Maker: An Exploration of Wisdom Design and Love
C.A. Soto Aguirre
Kavyata Publishing
978-0-9749391-5-5
(Oct 31, 2005)

Producing music from a guitar can bring joy to the listener, but producing the guitar itself can bring even more satisfaction to the luthier and his family. This novel follows the journey of self-discovery taken by a guitar maker who runs a small shop in a quaint Michigan town. Walker McBride finds himself confronting a number of challenges in his life: a physical impairment, growing his business while neglecting his family, a shaky marriage.

McBride's journey starts when he embarks on a trip of self-improvement to Spain to study guitar making techniques from the European masters. He feels that an important link in his mastery of the guitar is missing. In dealing with this personal challenge, he has a chance meeting with Kwame, a middle-aged engineering consultant who will eventually improve McBride's life and take his career and life to heights he never imagined.

Early in the novel, Kwame plunges into McBride's world of guitar making, learning the construction materials, the designs, and the countless factors that occur during the construction process. "Since I am trained as an engineer, I learned to solve problems using more mathematics than your luthier instructors in Spain," Kwame tells McBride. "I think we can build a good team and fix your problems. I will provide my knowledge in design optimization techniques and they will teach you the art of the guitar making."

Kwame's mantra for achieving an objective revolves around quality, beauty, value, and nature. Those four qualities lead McBride to study, in a new light, the task that is placed before him: building two classical guitars for a famous guitarist to replace a revered one that was destroyed.

Born in Venezuela, the author holds a PhD in mechanical engineering from Michigan State University. He describes himself as a first-time author; although he has published papers and chapters in technical journals and books, this is his first novel, and it is clearly a serious labor of love for Aguirre. He warns in the preface that English is not his first language and that the reader will detect his limited knowledge of the language occasionally in his wording. He is correct, and as he writes about life from an engineering mindset, his novel sometimes takes on

the tone of an engineering project, going from problem A to solution Z. The novel is well organized, as any engineering project must be, but the story could use more spontaneity and more of the human dimension to make the story move.

Still, the novel does allow the guitar-loving reader to peer into the fascinating world of the luthier at bench level, as he sets about creating a masterpiece. That discovery alone makes this novel a work to behold.

Karl Kunkel