



The AGS Achuff Challenge Incentive

Those of my dear AGS colleagues present at the February 3, 2024 AGS meeting will recall that I proposed a challenge-incentive to encourage AGS performers to play more, hopefully many more, of the arrangements and compositions of Vahdah Olcott Bickford at future meetings. You will find her splendid collection of 20 booklets of classical guitar music in the AGS LIBRARY tab of the web site. Each piece was lovingly transcribed and published by VOB between 1925 and 1963.

I really do wish to see our AGS Library of VOB publications browsed and performed more often than it currently is. So as stated on February 3rd, I am offering to pay \$20 to a performer or performers who play a piece from our AGS Library at an AGS meeting. I know your mind is probably running on the wild side right now with ideas on how to turn this into a lucrative opportunity. So accordingly, a set of guidelines and rules is needed to manage this challenge-incentive. The win-win comes not so much from the \$20, but rather comes from the AGS audience hearing the lovely music of VOB being performed, and from you becoming appreciative of the AGS Library collection of VOB's music. <https://www.americanguitarsociety.org/ags-library>

Background

At the February 3 meeting, John Steiner and I performed the Schubert duets "Valse Nobles," a guitar duet from the *Schubert Album for Guitar*, Op. 117, published in 1925 by the American Guitar Society. This booklet is now available in digital format on the AGS website under the Library tab. There are three duets under the title "Valse Nobles." Our performance was nicely applauded, and many commented on how lovely the pieces sounded. No surprise there--the life work of VOB produced lovely stuff!! This Schubert collection was the first transcribed and published by VOB and she was so inspired by her accomplishment that she continued in this direction for the next 40 years.

The AGS website's Library tab contains all 20 of these vintage AGS publications, including 18 that VOB lovingly and painstakingly researched and transcribed. Two others are transcriptions and compositions by Zarh Myron

Bickford. All this music was formatted, typeset, paid for, and inventoried for future sales by VOB and the AGS. When the new AGS website debuted in September 2021, all 20 publications were digitally scanned and posted for public viewing and downloading. I am creating this Achuff Incentive Challenge because I would like guitarists to know that this VOB catalogue exists, it is open to public to explore, and is worthy of performance by all guitarists including virtuosos.

The Achuff Challenge Incentive

As an incentive to adventurous guitarists like the ones who often perform at AGS meetings, I propose this self-funded remedy—the Achuff Challenge Incentive.

I will pay \$20 to a performer or performers who play a piece, including all corresponding sub-pieces under its title, at any AGS meeting. The scope of titles is limited to only those composed, transcribed or arranged by VOB (or Zarh) in the AGS publications found in the AGS Library digital collection.

This offer is subject to these guidelines, rules and caveats as follows:

- 1) I will pay one and only one \$20 bill per AGS meeting when the criteria are satisfied.
- 2) Whether the piece is for solo guitar or multiple guitars or instruments, the incentive amount paid is \$20 once per meeting. The division of the money is up to the multiple performers, if any.
- 3) The piece being performed must come from one of the AGS-VOB booklets posted on the AGS Library tab. In the Performance Sign-up Form MESSAGE BOX area, please declare the booklet title and Op. #, the title of the piece, and page numbers of the music as listed in the booklet's table of contents.
- 4) Please be the first to sign up to perform a VOB (or Zarh) piece from any of the 20 booklets. The criteria will be first come, first awarded per meeting. I will post a notice on the Performer Sign-up Form as to whether a candidate for the \$20 incentive has already submitted a VOB piece for the month. If you see the notice and realize you would not be eligible for the \$20 incentive, consider holding your piece for the subsequent month where you would be the

first. Please note this in the Message Box section of your sign-up form or in a separate Comment form directed to the AGS website.

An Example

John and I played “Valse Nobles” from Op. 117, and it contained three components of music—“Valse #9,” “Valse #10,” and “Valse #11” covering pages 10 and 11. The criteria for being a recipient of the \$20 bill was satisfied like this.

- 1) John and I were the first to submit a performance signup form declaring the VOB piece with booklet name, opus number, title, and that we were performing all three components under the title “Valses #9, #10 and #11.”
- 2) John and I played as a duet. One and only one \$20 bill would be the incentive regardless of how many players we were.
- 3) The music we played was downloaded right from the AGS Library web page and we played directly from the printed score.

Thank you for reading and considering my challenge. I hope you enjoy browsing all the guitar music contained in the AGS Library as you do your research. And most of all, do have fun deciding, learning, and mastering the piece(s) you want your AGS colleagues to hear when you perform them at a future AGS meeting.

Best regards,
Mark Achuff
AGS Community Liaison