

THE MUSICAL BOX

MUSINGS ON MUSIC FROM CENTRAL KENTUCKY AND BEYOND

in performance: california guitar trio and montreal guitar trio

{ May 11, 2019 @ 9:08am } ·



On paper, the blend of the California Guitar Trio and the Montreal Guitar Trio would seem an oil-and-vinegar proposition. The CGT is a classically disciplined and stylistically adventurous group whose often Zen-like stage persona mirrors a natural musical curiosity triggered decades ago under the tutelage of King Crimson guitarist Robert Fripp. The MGT is more purposely brash, seemingly inspired by the percussive might of flamenco and myriad folk inspirations (its newest album, “Danzas” is essentially a meshing of all that with an occasional jazz flourish).

But onstage, and on the fine new “In a Landscape” recording, a rich, playful and ultimately complimentary camaraderie emerges. On Friday evening at Headliners Music Hall in Louisville, the two (mostly) acoustic trios began by playing separately to introduce their specific musical platforms. The MGT went first with the dramatic, dizzying meshing of Al Di Meola’s “Mediterranean Sundance” and Paco De Lucia’s “Rio Ancho” with the CGT countering with a typically effortless genre-hopping excursion that took the group from the Dick Dale tribute within “Misirlou” to the contemplative Paul Richards original “Euphoria” to the classical majesty of Bach’s “Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor.”

But it was the closing set where both trios teamed that the sparks really flew. Aside from the almost Croatian sounding “Breizh Tango” (with MGT member Glenn Levesque briefly switching to mandolin) and a profoundly giddy, folk dance-informed take on Ennio Morricone’s theme from “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly” (with MGT members Sebastien Dufour and Marc Morin switching to charango and accordion, respectively), the collaboration focused on music from “In a Landscape.” And, musically, the resulting landscape was vast and varied.

Levesque’s “New Horizons” possessed a reserved, cinematic grace with a chattering percussive foundation while CGT mainstay Hideyo Moriya offered the dark textures and fierce, rolling tempos of the original “Fortune Island” (along with a stark spoken intro explaining his personal investment in the song’s inspiration that brought immediate quiet to the audience).

Both trios have reputations for mutating cover material to fit their string-savvy means. Here, there did so again, but in very respectful fashion with a serene yet modestly melancholy version of Radiohead’s “Weird Fishes” and a faithful, show-closing update of the David Bowie staple “Space Oddity.” Both tunes added strong vocal leads from Levesque, to make this adventurous six-man guitar squad part fusion band, part pop/folk group and part classical ensemble. The blending of those traits, along with the trios’ wonderfully disparate onstage personalities, made the program something of a boundless guitar joyride.

meet walter tunis



I am a native Kentuckian and freelance journalist who has been writing about contemporary music for the Lexington Herald-Leader since 1980. I have not a lick of honest musical talent myself, just a pair of appreciative ears for jazz, folk, blues, bluegrass, Americana, soul, Celtic, Cajun, chamber, worldbeat, nearly every form of rock 'n' roll imaginable and, when pressed, the occasional tango and polka.

Exploring a New Musical Genre of Guitar Sexet at Chamberfest



Arts & Events

Alan Viau

Posted: August 02, 2017



Photos by Pierre Larue

Six guitars on stage – 3 nylon stringed, 3 steel stringed – that delivered a mystical exploration of original music. The performance by the California Guitar Trio teamed up with the Montreal Guitar Trio at Chamberfest was captivating. Their virtuosity, creativity, and passion made their musical concert transcendent.

A cornucopia of guitar music selections from the California Guitar Trio and the Montreal Guitar Trio was featured at Chamberfest's July 27, 2017, evening concert. I love listening to guitar because I feel it is one of the most expressive and versatile instruments. Hearing this group of six musicians brought my appreciation to new heights.

The evening's program had each trio play a selection of music in the first half. The **California Guitar Trio** is comprised of Bert Lams, Hideyo Moriya and Paul Richards. The group has been touring and recording for 25 years; that's 1,800+ concerts and 15 albums. Their works explore the intersections between rock, jazz, classical, and world music. They have been using the New Standard Tuning developed by Robert Fripp in 1984.



Their first piece was *Melrose Avenue*, written and recorded by them, it has a middle-eastern flair with a driving and infectious rhythms. It was an exciting tune that promised a great evening of entertainment. It was followed by *Good Vibrations*, the popular Brian Wilson tune that had the audience swaying.

The next two pieces showed their musical versatility. *Claymont Waltz*, composed in 2016, had a hypnotic new age feel with repeating notes, flowing waves of sound, various intensities. Yatsuhashi Kengyou who died the same year Johan Sebastian Bach was born wrote the next piece, *Rokudan*, which was originally for Japanese harp. Hideyo Moriya arranged it for the trio using circulate playing. Each member plucked strings one after the other as if it was one instrument being played – beautiful timing.

Another well-known surf rock tune, *Pipeline*, released in 1962 by Carman and Spickard, followed that had the audience bouncing to the familiar riffs. The last set piece was the jazz standard *Blue Rondo a la Turk*, written in 1959 by Dave Brubeck. It is a difficult piece because of its Turkish influenced 9/8 time signature. However, the trio performed it with exquisite perfection.

It was the **Montreal Guitar Trio's** turn to strut their stuff. Marc Morin, Glenn Levesque, and Sebastien Dufour have been playing together for 18 years and released 7 albums. They got right down to it by playing Rush's *Tom Sawyer*. I immediately noticed their intensity and sense of fun on stage. These guys love what they do. Whereas the California Guitar Trio played steel string guitars, the Montreal Guitar Trio use nylon strings are also throw in mandolin, electric bass, and accordion in their mix.

The trio's virtuosity was displayed in their performance in three of Manuel de Falla's *Siete Canciones Populares Espanolas*. These are Spanish folk songs that de Falla modified the harmonies to his liking. The trio presented a passionate flamenco style piece where I was absorbed by their fingers dancing across the guitar neck, a lullaby whose last note floated away in the church, and a dance where I liked the electric bass adding a subtle beat support to the music.

One of my favorite all time guitarist is Al Di Meola. I was so pleased to hear the trio play his collaborative piece with Paco de Lucia, *Mediterranean Sundance/ Rio Ancho*. It pays homage to flamenco as well. But this piece is technically difficult because of the speed and precision required, coupled with playing extremely long melodic phrases, and complex fingerpicking. It was an absolute delight to see them play and feel the passion.

The last song of their set was *Garam Masala* composed by Dufour. They described the piece as like the Indian spice – a blend of musical flavours. Everyone loved this musical number with its Indian drone quality at the start and the percussive belly dancing type music from Iraq at the end.

The second half of the concert was all six musicians on stage playing as a sextet. They started collaborating 7 years ago and tour often together. Because they have been at for so long, they have been composing original music for a guitar sextet thereby creating their own musical genre.

The first pieces were written by Levesque whose harmonies made me recall the music of Harmonium a Quebec band of the '70's. The piece *New Horizon* was a New Age / Spacey feeling because it was inspired by the space program. *First Steps* was a hopeful simple lullaby dedicated to his kids.

Magneto, written by Dufour, really stretched creative guitar playing as it mimicked electronic/ techno sound beats influenced by progressive rock. It was the first attempt at a sextet composition and in interesting experimental piece. They played two more songs that had the New Age quality to them that were pleasing.

They ended the concert with a rousing rendition of *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly* soundtrack from the same titled movie. A classic Ennio Morricone piece that was enjoyed by all in a return to the familiar at the end of a mind blowing concert experience. To really satisfy the crowd, the encore was David Bowie's *Space Oddity*.

This was their second appearance at Chamberfest and I am sure not their last because these are great musicians that cutting a new musical genre.

By: **Alan Viau**

Guitar trios strike a chord in Chamberfest finale



NATASHA GAUTHIER

[More from Natasha Gauthier](http://ottawacitizen.com/author/natasha-gauthier) ([HTTP://OTTAWACITIZEN.COM/AUTHOR/NATASHA-GAUTHIER](http://ottawacitizen.com/author/natasha-gauthier))

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California and Montreal Guitar Trios

At Dominion Chalmers

Reviewed Thursday night

What has six heads, 12 hands and 60 fingers? The closing concert of Chamberfest 2015, featuring the Montreal and California Guitar Trios.

The globe- and genre-trotting program was like a condensed version of the festival itself. The menu had a little bit of everything: surf guitar, Rush, David Bowie, film music, George Harrison, world flavours from India, the Middle East, Central Europe and Latin America, Félix Leclerc, and even some Bach.

The California Guitar Trio were first up. The ensemble members read like the start of a joke: Angeleno Paul Richards, Belgian Bert Lams, and Japanese Hideo Moriya. But they've been playing together for more than 20 years and have honed a blended, laid back West Coast style.

The 1959 instrumental hit Sleepwalk had fans of doo-wop nostalgia swooning. A jointly composed original, The Marsh, was serene and resonant, with echoes of Mason Williams. But a transcription of Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor was too rigid and mechanical, and could have used a dose of the more relaxed phrasing the trio exhibited in their pop excerpts.

The California Guitar Trio sounded like, well, a highly accomplished guitar trio, but the Montreal Guitar Trio sounded like an orchestra. Marc Morin, Sébastien Dufour and especially Glenn Lévesque are all virtuosos, and together they play with smoldering intensity and no small measure of mano a mano competitiveness.

Boomers and Can-rock fans loved their rendition of Rush's Tom Sawyer, in which Dufour and his impressive guitar slapping skills took the place of a drum kit. Dufour turned tabla player in his original, South-Asian spiced composition Garam Masala, with Lévesque doing an effective sitar impersonation.

The two groups came together after the intermission. A cover of Bowie's Major Tom was a hit, and Lévesque's fast-and-furious Breizh Tango, an unlikely but catchy mash-up of music from Brittany, Argentina and Romania, invited enthusiastic audience participation.

The inevitable Ottawa standing o after the final strum was longer and rowdier than the chamber music norm, and seemed to be as much for Chamberfest as a whole as for the half-dozen deserving musicians on stage.



THE MUSICAL BOX

MUSINGS ON MUSIC FROM CENTRAL KENTUCKY AND BEYOND

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{ April 17, 2015 @ 12:14am } ·

If you were to judge last night's perfectly wondrous joint performance from the California Guitar Trio and the Montreal Guitar Trio at Natasha's by its first set, you would swear each group hailed from opposing universes of style and performance temperament. The beauty of such an estimation, though, was that it turned out to be at least partly correct.

The first set was where each trio played separately. The MGT, which was making its Lexington debut, opted for a physical and percussive command that veered off into world music accents of flamenco drive, Latin lyricism and Eastern European fancy that culminated with the raga-like drama and texture of Garam Masala.

The CGT, a near-annual visitor to local venues for over a decade, again appeared relaxed and unassuming but used its five-song introduction last night to sail effortlessly through surf, Bach, originals rich with compositional finesse and its now-popular mash up of the cowboy classic Ghost Riders in the Sky with The Doors' epic swansong hit Riders on the Storm, aptly dubbed Ghost Riders on the Storm. The seemingly disparate melodies meshed as readily as the medley's title.

The latter piece seemed to preview the game plan of the second set, where the two trios played as a sextet. The differences in technique were spelled out in the combined group's very design.

CGT members Paul Richards, Bert Lams and Hideyo Moriya all stuck exclusively to acoustic guitars while the MGT players frequently switched to electric bass and accordion (Marc Morin), charango (Sebastien Dufour) and mandolin (Glenn Levesque). The combination transformed the high-spirited Breizh Tangointo a Greek dance, Penguin Café Orchestra's Perpetuum Mobile into a minimalist meditation and Radiohead's Weird Fishes into a folk-prog séance that left artists and audience with a few beats of glorious silence at its conclusion before applause erupted.

The show closing treatment of Ennio Morricone's theme from The Good, the Bad and the Ugly even went so far as to combine arrangements the trios have recorded on their own – one studied and introspective, the other more openly buoyant. It was a blissful union of two guitar groups united in senses of playfulness and discovery.

meet walter tunis



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PRESENTER QUOTES : 2016 to present

"The pleasure is all mine, the show was fantastic and, as always, Paul and the rest of the group were a delight to work with." Caitlin North

"They were wonderful! Terrific evening all around and would definitely have them back to the Shadoblt." Corey Philley

"Folks raved about the show." Roger Menell

"The crowd had a really good time." Jean-Sylvain Bourdelais, Director

"We thoroughly enjoyed the show and the musicians were a joy to work with! Roger Gietzen, Director

"I've only heard great things about the show!" Ryan Price

"Fantastic show and artists, we loved it, the audience loved it. Wished we sold more tickets but with that said, I would like to bring them back." Michelle MacLennan

"We couldn't have been happier with CGT and MGT. They were professional in all aspects, yet a lot of fun to work with (those don't always go hand in hand)." Steve Lemmon

" the evening was just superb, and immensely enjoyed by everyone there. ...superb musicianship, evocative performers, very warm and engaging and above all, very gracious guests!" Brian Finley

"Was a pleasure having the bands here. Nice folks, easy to work with and a super show. [Tech] setup was about as easy as it gets." - Craig Moddle

"The show was a huge success! Both groups were very easy to work with, sold a lot of merch, and

seemed content with the turnout, settlement, etc. The audience was also thrilled with both groups. We look forward to having them back." Nora Cary, Owner

August 13, 2017 at Hammer Theater - San Jose - CA

"they were easy to work with and had a very solid audience response." Bruce Labadie

December 2, 2017 at Del E Webb Center for the Performing Arts - Wickenburg - AZ

"The show was great and the fellas were a joy to work with. We even managed to schedule a photo shoot for CGT's new guitars. We loved the show and look forward to booking them again in the future." Abe Markin, Artist & Production Services Mgr

October 2, 2018 at Nightingale Concert Hall - Reno - NV

"The band was fantastic - we very much enjoyed having them here and hope that you will pass on our sincere thanks to them for the great show they presented for us. The overall performance was a total hit." Tamara Scronce, Executive Director U-Reno Performing Arts Series

"We had rave reviews from both the concert class students and the regular concert goers. It was a fabulous performance!" Marti Deyo, Programming Asst

October 5, 2018 at Garehime Heights Park - Las Vegas - NV

"The two groups delivered a high quality performance that the audience thoroughly enjoyed. The experience working with both CGT and MG3 was nothing but positive." Brian Kendall, City of Las Vegas Ofc. Cultural Affairs

October 6, 2018 at MIM Music Theater - Phoenix - AZ

the shows were wonderful and everyone extremely pleasant to work with. Our audiences left very [pleased] with [what] they saw and heard." Patrick Murphy, Theater Manager

QUOTES : California Guitar Trio / Montreal Guitar Trio November Tour 2013

"The show was fabulous, the raves were everywhere and such a nice polite talented group of musicians. We were blown over by the sounds and explanations of the songs.. These guys were GOOD!!!! They were AWESOME and we wish them all the best on their careers."

-Monty Hettich (Lander Community Concert Association) Lander, WY

"It was a great show and the audience loved them! Thank you for your help in getting them to Blackfoot."

-Susan Mann (Blackfoot Performing Arts Center) Blackfoot, ID

"The concert was outstanding! I think everyone thoroughly enjoyed it. What are great group to work with too. Very professional."

-Don Sparhawk (Brigham Young University – Rexburg) Rexburg, ID

"Oh, of course it went just WONDERFULLY. We sold very well, and it was, as always, just a great, great show. The audience loved it so much, and the standing ovation at the end wasn't even something they thought about. They just leapt to their feet and roared the second they could. And they are all just the nicest guys to work with. It was a very good presenting experience."

-Camille Barigar (Arts On Tour – CSI Fine Arts Center) Twin Falls, ID

"What an awesome show. We sold it out! Great show, awesome guys."

-Kristine Bretall (Sun Valley Center for the Arts) Sun Valley, ID

"The show was incredible and I have heard nothing but very positive feedback. I would add that both groups were a pleasure to host at our venue."

-Margo Hood (Grays Harbor College – Bishop Center for the Arts) Aberdeen, WA

"The show went well and our audience loved it. I got lots of glowing remarks...noticeably more than what I usually get."

-Brad Burdick (Mt Baker Theatre Center) Bellingham, WA

"Fantastic musicians and their sound person, Ian, is one of the best I've run into period! And everyone in both groups were just the nicest people."

-Sound guy (Grass Valley Center for the Arts) Grass Valley, CA

"They got rave reviews and were absolutely delightful to work with."

-Mark McCrary (Ross Ragland Theater) Klamath Falls, OR

"Our audience and all our Board members LOVED the California Guitar Trio and the Montreal Guitar Trio. Many of our audience have asked us to bring them back in the future."

-Linda Gargis (Seacoast Entertainment) Florence, OR

CONCERT REVIEW SHEET

ARTIST California Guitar Trio + Montreal Guitar Trio DATE March 13, 2014

This artist recently performed in your community. We are interested in your opinion and your audience reaction to the concert. Return in the enclosed envelope, please.

Thank you for your cooperation.

If you prefer, this sheet may be completed online at www.alliedconcertservices.com

TOWN Grand Island, NE Concert began at 7:30 and ended at 9:45 p.m.

Did the contact person find the Artist congenial and cooperative? Yes, and Fun!

They truly enjoyed the custom-made dinner we provided. ☺

Was the Artist ready to start the program on time? yes

Was the stage personality of the Artist friendly? yes - well received by audience!

What was the general audience reaction to the Artist's performance? Comments included-

"I didn't know there were so many sounds that could be made with guitars!"
"Masterful performance"

Were you pleased with the performance? Extremely!

What program changes, if any, would make for a better performance? none. It was perfect!

Encore? Yes! Standing Ovation? Yes!

Would you recommend this Artist to other communities? Yes!

If not, explain _____

We value any criticism, positive as well as negative. Our goal is to present quality professional artists to your community. The enjoyment and appreciation of your audience to each concert is of the utmost concern to us.

Additional Comments:

Each performer was so "masterful" in his own right. In a
trio, the group had its own unique sound. Together, six guitars
in full diapason, they produced unbelievable arrangements
of familiar and original pieces. It was truly a heartfelt
performance and inspiring evening of music. WOW!

CONCERT REVIEW SHEET

ARTIST California Guitar Trio + Montreal Guitar Trio DATE March 11, 2014

This artist recently performed in your community. We are interested in your opinion and your audience reaction to the concert. Return in the enclosed envelope, please.

Thank you for your cooperation.

If you prefer, this sheet may be completed online at www.alliedconcertservices.com

TOWN Rapid City, SD Concert began at 7:30 and ended at 10:00
pm

Did the contact person find the Artist congenial and cooperative? Yes

Was the Artist ready to start the program on time? Yes

Was the stage personality of the Artist friendly? Yes

What was the general audience reaction to the Artist's performance? Very positive

Were you pleased with the performance? Yes

What program changes, if any, would make for a better performance? _____

Encore? Yes Standing Ovation? Yes - even at intermission!

Would you recommend this Artist to other communities? Yes

If not, explain _____

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Additional Comments:

CONCERT REVIEW SHEET

ARTIST California Guitar Trio + Montreal Guitar Trio DATE Sat. March 15, '14

This artist recently performed in your community. We are interested in your opinion and your audience reaction to the concert. Return in the enclosed envelope, please.

Thank you for your cooperation.

If you prefer, this sheet may be completed online at www.alliedconcertservices.com

TOWN Willmar Concert began at 7:30 pm and ended at 9:40 pm

Did the contact person find the Artist congenial and cooperative? Yes

Was the Artist ready to start the program on time? Yes

Was the stage personality of the Artist friendly? Yes, very much so.

What was the general audience reaction to the Artist's performance? Great. The Montreal group started the performance and CGT came on later.

Were you pleased with the performance? Yes. One of the best concerts we've had.

What program changes, if any, would make for a better performance? N. A.

Encore? Yes Standing Ovation? Yes. The combined trios did Bohem. Rhop.

Would you recommend this Artist to other communities? Yes

If not, explain _____

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Additional Comments:

I heard more positive comments on this concert than I've ever heard before after a concert. These guys were great! Someone asked, after the concert, if they could perform another set!

CONCERT REVIEW SHEET

ARTIST California Guitar Trio + Montreal Guitar Trio DATE 3-14-14

This artist recently performed in your community. We are interested in your opinion and your audience reaction to the concert. Return in the enclosed envelope, please.

Thank you for your cooperation.

If you prefer, this sheet may be completed online at www.alliedconcertservices.com

TOWN Holstein, IA Concert began at 7:30 and ended at 10:00

Did the contact person find the Artist congenial and cooperative? Very!

Was the Artist ready to start the program on time? yes

Was the stage personality of the Artist friendly? yes

What was the general audience reaction to the Artist's performance? The audience loved this group

Were you pleased with the performance? yes

What program changes, if any, would make for a better performance? None

Encore? yes Standing Ovation? yes

Would you recommend this Artist to other communities? yes

If not, explain _____

We value any criticism, positive as well as negative. Our goal is to present quality professional artists to your community. The enjoyment and appreciation of your audience to each concert is of the utmost concern to us.

Additional Comments:

What nice people the six artists and their sound man were! They joined us at the Country Club after the show and were so congenial!