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Acclaimed Canadian acoustic Sultans swing their way to region

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January 25, 2013 12:00 am • [Tim Shellberg Times Correspondent](#)

Later this year, the three members that make up the acclaimed Canadian acoustic outfit Sultans of String will find their stages a little more crowded than usual.

Come summer, the trio will be joined by orchestras, both in their homeland as well as here in the States, for approximately a dozen symphonic concerts.

“It’s pretty addictive,” said Sultans co-founder Chris McKhool. “It’s really fun to make music with the guys in the band, but imagine what it would be like with 60 musicians behind us.”

The group makes its way in trio form to Valparaiso’s Front Porch Music Feb. 1. Sultans – violinist McKhool, guitarist Kevin Laliberte and bassist Drew Birtson, formed in Toronto in 2007. McKhool was a renowned musician and songsmith in his own right in his homeland before co-founding the Sultans, releasing a trio of acclaimed albums before the Sultans’ first set, “Luna,” hit the shelves in 2007.

Since the release of “Luna,” the Sulans have received and been nominated for a myriad of awards in the acoustic, folk and international music stratas for their unique blend of folk, jazz, world and flamenco genres. Additionally, the Sultans’ second set, 2009’s “Yalla Yalla!” received an Instrumental Album of the Year nomination by the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, the Great White North’s equivalent of the Grammys.

Last spring, the Sultans collaborated with what McKhool called an “orchestral supergroup” featuring players from numerous Canadian orchestras. They are currently mixing the songs they recorded – a handful of Sultans favorites along with several new works – and McKhool hopes the collection will be released in the next few months.

The new set, appropriately titled "Symphony!," will be their first since 2011’s “Move.”

“It’s definitely the most complicated project I’ve ever undertaken,” McKhool said. “There’s a lot of large, moving parts ... it’s going to be a really fun record for both our fans and for us, to be able to create this piece of art that’s going to sound different than anything we’ve done.”

In March, the trio is slated to open for Celtic pioneers the Chieftains in Stamford, Conn. Chieftains’ leader Paddy Maloney made a guest appearance with the trio and their orchestra on their forthcoming set.

“He did incredible pipes and tin whistle solos for us,” McKhool said of Maloney. “I’m hoping that maybe, if he feels in the mood, that Paddy would like to play with us on that tune that he recorded with us.”

Sultans of String are also slated to perform at Chicago’s Old Town School of Folk Music Feb. 2. (Call (773) 728-6000, tickets are \$20.)

**FYI:** Sultans of String will perform at 8 p.m. Feb. 1 at Front Porch Music, 505 E. Lincolnway,



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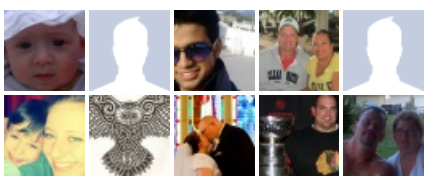
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