

■ **MUSIC:** Sultans of String

Transported to far-off musical worlds

NICOLE LEJEUNE
For The Tribune

WELLAND — In the midst of one of the most confusing winters that we've experienced over the years, members of Welland-Port Colborne Concert Association were whisked away to the far reaches of the globe.

The Saturday evening show at the J.M. Ennis Auditorium took the audience to Lebanon, the Middle East and Spain, thanks to the association's fourth performance of the season, the Sultans of String.

Without wasting a moment, the Sultans started the night off with a bang; opening with a fast-paced Hungarian gypsy tune that got the audience clapping along with their stomping melodies. The only thing missing was a loud "Opa!" from the crowd. Each song they showcased was more diverse than the last and it was a nice touch to have founding member and violin player Chris McKhool explain the origins of each song, from working with village elders up north to trips to Lebanon with his father on a blind journey to find long lost relatives. Each tale was saturated with culture, as were the songs they inspired.

Family and friendship connections really seemed to be a driving force of the group; while playing together they're always smiling and laughing but most importantly they're very supportive of one another.

Two of the Sultans' members, Kevin Laliberte (guitar) and



Sultans of String perform at Welland's Dr. J. M. Ennis Auditorium during a presentation hosted by Welland-Port Colborne Concert Association.

NICOLE LEJEUNE Tribune Photo

Eddie Paton (guitar), have solo albums and each performed one of their original songs as well as a group performance titled *To You* written by bassist Drew Birston with his wife.

Sultans of String are completely egoless during their shows. Throughout the evening's concert, they shared the stage with six other talented artists ranging from three different horn players, an oud (a pear-shaped stringed instru-

ment commonly used in North Africa) player, a female vocalist and a fabulous flamenco dancer.

Since the Sultans are such a multicultural infused group, they really have a great advantage of being able to explore almost infinite cultures and musical influences and incorporating them into their already vast repertoire.

With each guest contributor, another layer was added to the Sultans' complex sounds; transporting their audience to whichever destination they saw fit.

Towards the end of the concert, Sultans of String invited all of their musical guests on stage to perform the title track from the album of the same name, *Yalla Yalla!*, which according to McKhool means "Come on, let's go!" in Arabic. Easily the most danceable song of the night, spirits were high as all 11 performers exhibited their phenomenal talents one by one.

To cap off the night, McKhool

told a touching story about his proposal to his now-wife. He was decked out in a tuxedo on the shore of Lake Ontario, he fittingly proposed via a song he had written just for the occasion.

Concertgoers were lucky to be sent off to McKool's funny and sweet tune with lyrics such as "... and if you shake your head, I'll become a Buddhist and move to the South of France."

Luckily McKhool got the answer he was hoping for and Sultans of String can continue to wow audiences with their eclectic sounds for years to come.

People interested in having their names placed on the waiting list for memberships to the Welland-Port Colborne Concert Association or who wish to attend specific performances may contact membership secretary Hilda Belcastro at 905-788-1648. Season tickets are \$130 for adults and \$65 for students.

		SEAWAY MALL 800 NIAGARA STREET T: 905-735-5288 <small>DIGITAL SOUND</small> <small>ADVANCED TICKETS AVAILABLE AT CINEPLEX.COM</small>	
SHOWTIMES FOR FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2012 TO THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2012			
WAR HORSE (PG) FRI, TUE 8:00; SAT-SUN 1:00, 4:20, 8:00; MON, WED-THURS 7:20	MAN ON A LEDGE (PG) FRI, TUE 7:10, 9:35; SAT-SUN 1:40, 4:25, 7:10, 9:35; MON, WED 8:20	THE WOMAN IN BLACK FRI, TUE 6:50, 9:30; SAT-SUN 1:20, 4:10, 6:50, 9:30; MON, WED-THURS 7:50	EXTREMELY LOUD & INCREDIBLY CLOSE FRI, TUE 6:30, 9:20; SAT-SUN 12:50, 3:40, 6:30, 9:20; MON, WED-THURS 7:30
ONE FOR THE MONEY (PG) FRI, TUE 7:00, 9:25; SAT-SUN 1:30, 4:05, 7:00, 9:25; MON, WED-THURS 8:00	BIG MIRACLE FRI, TUE 6:40, 9:15; SAT-SUN 1:10, 3:50, 6:40, 9:15; MON, WED-THURS 7:40		
CHRONICLE (14A) FRI, TUE 7:05, 9:40; SAT-SUN 1:50, 4:00, 7:05, 9:40; MON, WED-THURS 8:10			