

# Acclaimed Trio to Perform at Mill Square

By [Kaitlyn Fitzpatrick](#) - March 25, 2016



*Sultans of String. Photo courtesy of LW Communications.*

World music and symphony fans are in for a mellifluous medley this spring as award-winning string trio, [Sultans of String](#) will be stopping in the Sault. As part of their North American tour, the *Juno Award* nominees will be collaborating with the [Sault Symphony Orchestra](#) and performing at the [Mill Square Machine Shop](#) On Saturday, April 23, 2016 at 8pm.

The trio consists of [Chris McKhool](#), [Kevin Laliberte](#) and [Drew Birston](#), who bring a wealth of musical experience to the table after many years of touring with Canadian music icons Chantal Kreviazuk, Melanie Doane, Jesse Cook and more. The group has won two Canadian Folk Music Awards, a Sirius XM award and first place in in the International Songwriting Competition.

Chris McKhool, Sultans of String's band leader, violinist and Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medalist, graciously provided Sault Online with a bit of Q/A:

**Sault Online (SO): Is McKhool your real name?**

*Chris McKhool (CM): Yes, my ancestors are from Lebanon, which is why Arabic music influences our songs. My grandfather left as a stowaway in the early 1900s and the original spelling was Makhoul. The authorities assumed it was the Irish pronunciation (McCool) and the name McKhool stuck. We are the only ones in Canada with that spelling.*

**SO: How long have you been playing the violin?**

*CM: Since I was a kid; I started when I was six or seven and learned by using the Suzuki Technique (learning by ear.) In high school I started playing with bands. When I got out of high school I kept playing in university.*

**SO: How did Sultans of String form and when?**

*CM: Ten years ago, when I met Kevin Laliberte and Drew Birston eventually joined. We just released our fifth album, *Subcontinental Drift*. Four years ago started to work on symphony project and played with Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver symphony orchestras. A lot of songs started as improvisations. It's an amazing experience to work with the symphonies.*



Photo courtesy of [LW Communications](#)

**SO: How long have you been touring together?**

*CM: April 1st is the ten-year anniversary of us performing under the name Sultans of String. We are releasing a retrospective vinyl only edition of our favorite songs.*

**SO: What is the best part of being on tour?**

*CM: The more we perform the more we can hone our craft. We get better by playing to different audiences.*

**SO: Why did your band choose to stop in the Sault?**

*CM: We love performing and the further we get from a big city, the more fun we have. It becomes a bit more special in a way than just doing a gig down the street from our house. We can see how people react with different songs and the collaboration with the local symphonies is amazing.*

**SO: How many people are in the band, and what instruments are used?**

*CM: I play Violin, Kevin has a flamenco-style nylon string guitar and a foot drum, Drew is playing electric bass.*

**SO: What is the dominant musical style of Sultans of String?**

*CM: We play everything from Arabic, to Cuban, to east coast Celtic tunes, flamenco, gypsy jazz, put it in a blender, purée it and Sultans of String comes out.*

**SO: What other bands have a similar style to Sultans of String?**

*CM: Kevin Laliberte, our guitar player, has played with Jesse Cook and has sat in on a Canadian tour with the Chieftains. Drew has played with Melanie Doane, Chantal Kreviazuk, and is married to Amanda Martinez. Our sound is similar to Natalie MacMaster's.*

**SO: What process, setting or activity helps your band create new material?**

*CM: Sometimes Kevin and I getting together and writing from a topical standpoint. For example, we will write a song about someone we met in northern Ontario, or Luna the Whale, or an island off the east coast of Nova Scotia. Sometimes the music comes first.*

**SO: How do you coordinate your music with the Sault Symphony Orchestra?**

*CM: They had their first practice with our music this week. We get one rehearsal with them; we really have to know our stuff. We have a lot of fun but we are concentrating pretty hard. It was a lot of work and emotional energy to put that together.*

**SO: What venue are you looking forward to performing at?**

*CM: Where I am in at that very moment. There is a lot of work involved behind the scenes to keep this project on the go. I get to make music with people I love and play for really fantastic audiences across North America. It's just wherever we are.*

---

Check out their hit song, *Luna*:

For tickets, please contact KCTC Box Office in Station Mall or 705-945-7299, [www.kctc.ca](http://www.kctc.ca), and at the door.

The Sultans of String's new album, [Subcontinental Drift](#) is now available on iTunes.

**Kaitlyn Fitzpatrick**

Kaitlyn Fitzpatrick was born and raised in Sault Ste. Marie. Her father Jim introduced her to the exciting world of news media as a child, bringing her