

Sultans of String Serenades Sault With Symphony

By Kaitlyn Fitzpatrick - April 24, 2016



An intimate gathering of Sault Ste. Marie's most dedicated music aficionados was electrified by the Sault Symphony Orchestra last night at the Kiwanis Community Theatre Centre. The symphony took the audience on an unforgettable musical journey with special guests, the Sultans of String.

The Toronto-based, award winning Sultans of String recently arrived in the Sault after being on the road for weeks. Their tour stretches from multiple U.S. locations all of the way to the U.K. The group will culminate their travels with their final leg in western Canada.

The trio of Canadian virtuosos is led by violinist Chris McKhool, who oscillated between East Coast fiddling, haunting yet hypnotic distorted riffs, lovely Latino licks and Middle Eastern melodies with a smile. With the symphony's violinists, brass and woodwind performers to complement him, listeners were spellbound. His penchant for storytelling dotted each break between songs with evocative chronicles of each song's creation. Impressed by the skill of the orchestra and the acoustic quality of the venue, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee medalist was ecstatic at the conclusion of the event.

"What a fantastic experience it was with the Sault Symphony," expressed McKhool. "They were so tight. I am really pleased to have been able to play this music with them."

McKhool was accompanied by guitarist Kevin Laliberte and bassist Drew Birston, both who have played for Canadian icons such as Jesse Cook and Chantal Kreviazuk.

Laliberte, who specializes in nylon string Flamenco-style guitar, delivered romantic Latin arpeggios to the entranced audience but was no stranger to Celtic folk rhythms, periodically using his instrument as another addition to the Symphony's incredible percussionists.

The audience was regularly engaged by bassist Birston, who led choral clapping sessions to introduce most of the higher-cadence pieces. His highly diverse style of bass was accented beautifully by the symphony's frequencies from the deep brass and string players.

Dr. John Wilkinson, the symphony's highly acclaimed music director and conductor, was pleased by the series which was arranged by composer Rebecca Pellett. The symphony only had two opportunities to practice with the band but still managed to perform with formidable synchronicity. Although the score presented a challenge to the orchestra due to its rapidly changing rhythm, Wilkinson was satisfied with how the musicians were able to perform in groups as opposed to individually.

"It's kind of tricky on one level but there is a security to it," remarked Wilkinson. "You always had friends."

The entire ensemble will perform in Elliot Lake today at 2:00 pm in the high school gymnasium. The trio plans on staying there for the night and will treat the students tomorrow.
