

The Millbrook Independent

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SWINGING STRINGS AT TRINITY-PAWLING

Music Review

by **Kevin T. McEneaney**
Sat Apr 2nd, 2016



From left: Rosendo Leon, Drew Birston, Chris McKool, and Kevin Laliberté.

Last Friday night The Sultans of String held forth with their genre-bending folk music. This Canadian group from Toronto had arrived via Cornell to blast any expectations about folk music one might have. The performance marked exactly their ten-year anniversary from when violinist Chris McKhool teamed up with Canadian guitarist Kevin Laliberté. McKhool, from Lebanon, possesses a considerable jazz background while Laliberté specializes in flamenco. Both extraordinarily talented artists can play anything under the sun. Joined by Rosendo “Chendy” Leon from Cuba on panoply of drums, they received a powerful jazz-like backing on bass guitar from Drew Birston. These four musicians sounded like ten musicians.

Laliberté, who can play in any style ever invented, is the best guitarist I’ve heard since Jimi Hendrix. Laliberté now plays a Blackbird, a black carbon fiber style guitar made only in San Francisco. Apparently it can’t crack in sub-zero weather. McKhool is also a composer of some note. They played his composition “Luna” to conclude the first set. This was a hymn to a whale. In addition to hearing whale-like cries and ocean sounds, one hears sound bites of Bartok, Cage, and Ravi-Shankar cavorting like whipping tails. They incorporate some pre-recorded sound loops in their performance. You can listen to a YouTube clip of Luna below.

Their renditions of many traditional tunes are goosed up with musical phrases from various traditions that turn a national song, whether Irish, American, Hindu, Inuit, Hebrew, or Spanish into an international medley. While all of the group remain talented singers who can sing in harmony, their diction might be improved.

They play with the spontaneity of a hot jazz combo. McKhool cavorts mesmerizingly about the stage, playing and wagging his six-string violin, like a Sufi master. While they play folk tunes, it might be more accurate to label the group as folk-jazz masters. Like a jazz combo, they alternate

Today's Calendar Events

Type of Event

Tue Apr 12th, 2016

Concert at Annandale

Wed Apr 13th, 2016

Healthcare at Millbrook

Tea ceremony at Millbrook

Writing workshop at Millbrook

Tea ceremony at Millbrook

[View All »](#)

What's wrong with Romance?

We Love Dulac (donkey and all)!



Kevin T. McEneaney, cultural reporter, is the author of *Russell Banks: In Search for Freedom* (2010) and *Tom Wolfe's America: Heroes, Pranksters, & Fools* (2009), which won an Outstanding Academic Title award from the American Library Association in 2010. *Hunter S. Thompson: Fear, Loathing and the Birth of Gonzo* will be published this summer by Roman & Littlefield. He is the author of two major poetry collections, *The Enclosed Garden* and *Longing*, which has been translated into French and Japanese. He is the Poet Laureate of Smithfield Valley.

Recent TMI Poems

Unwanted Guests and Debts
by **Miloš Djurdjević**
Tue Apr 12th, 2016

Promenade
by **Marcelo Quevedo**, translated
by **Liz McNicoll**
Fri Apr 8th, 2016

Perplexities
by **Loredana Ingenito**
Fri Mar 18th, 2016

Blue Funk
by **Kevin T. McEneaney**
Sat Mar 5th, 2016

Writ in snow
by **Kevin T. McEneaney**
Mon Feb 15th, 2016

Winter Lodger
by **Kevin T. McEneaney**
Sun Feb 7th, 2016

The Digging
by **Rennie McQuilkin**
Tue Jan 26th, 2016

An Armenian Winemaker in
the Copper Age
by **Jonathan Wells**
Fri Jan 22nd, 2016

Atheist carolers walked into

group play with solo extemporary flights. The audience accompanied the musicians with clapping during several tunes and I was half expecting to see people dancing in the isle of Gardiner Theater.

The Sultans of String have the reputation of being Canada's foremost representative of international music. They have garnered two JUNO Award nominations (the equivalent of our Grammy Award). Last year they recorded some tracks with The Chieftains. The Sultans of String have five albums available and McKhool has four solo albums of his own out. They make folk music interesting with their jazz warp.



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