Los Angeles Guitar Quartet

John Dearman
Matthew Greif
William Kanengiser
Scott Tennant

Post-performance discussion with the artists

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Sponsored by The Point
Music from the Time of Cervantes
   Jácaras
   El Villano
   Diferéncias Sobre Las Foliás
   Chacona (La Vida Bona)
   Oy Comamos

Brandenburg Concerto #6 in B-flat Major, BWV 1051
   Allegro
   Adagio ma non tanto
   Allegro

Three Brazilian Pieces
   Da Sábado pra Dominguinhos
   A Lenda do Caboclo
   Samba Novo

Intermission

Opals
   Black Opal
   Water Opal
   White Opal

Road to the Sun
   New Hampshire Premiere

Pat Metheny: Road to the Sun (2016) was commissioned through the International Arts Foundation, Inc., for the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet by the lead commissioners: Newman Center for the Performing Arts/University of Denver and Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, College of Fine + Applied Arts, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Additional support provided by co-commissioners: Lobero Theater Foundation, Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College, 92nd Street Y, Performing Arts Series at Johnson County Community College and Soka University of America/Soka Performing Arts Center.
Program Notes

Music from the Time of Cervantes
arr. W. Kanengiser

In March 2009, LAGQ debuted the theatrical production The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote with British actor/comedian John Cleese. Interweaving tales from the classic novel with arrangements of pieces that Cervantes could have heard in his lifetime, it melded music and storytelling. Tonight’s recital includes selections from this production.

Jácaras is an anonymous canción ("No hay que decir primor") from the 17th century. With raucous strumming and castanets imitating horses’ hooves, it accompanies Don Quixote’s departure from his farm to become an adventuring knight. El Villano (The Rustic) is a country dance from the anthology Flores de Música collected by Antonio Martín y Coll. It introduces Sancho Panza, Quixote’s trusty squire. Diferencias Sobre Las Folias is a set of variations contrasting on the famous harmonic progression, Folias de España. It tells of the famous argument between knight and squire, and of their reconciliation. Chacona (La Vida Bona), from the Libro Segunda de Tonos y Villancicos (1624) by Juan Arañes, is one of the most celebrated early examples of the form. The chacona, which by Bach’s time had become one of the most noble and profound of all dance forms, was a suggestive and prohibited danza in 1500s Spain, almost their version of our macarena. It features the lines, “Here’s to the good life, good little life: let’s do the chacona”). Oy comamos y bebamos is a four-voice villancico from the Cancionero Palacio, written by Juan de Encina. The opening stanza is “Hoy comamos y bebamos, y cantemos y holgüemos, que mañana ayunaremos” (Today we eat and drink, and sing and make merry, for tomorrow we must fast”). It serves as a fitting epilogue for Don Quixote’s quixotic character.

Brandenburg Concerto #6 in B-flat Major
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Written in 1721 as a means of gaining favor from the Margrave of Brandenburg, Bach’s Six concerts à plusieurs instruments never garnered payment or even thanks for the composer. Yet they establish him today as the master of the concerto grosso style pioneered by Corelli. Brandenburg Concerto #6 is scored for string orchestra, but without violins; violas carry the upper melodic material. This lower tessitura makes the piece ideal for an arrangement for guitar quartet. Set in a fast-slow-fast structure, the piece showcases Bach’s peerless use of imitative writing. The first movement is drivingly propulsive, with the two top parts chasing each other in a canon at the eighth note. The middle movement is one of Bach’s stately and shimmering Adagios, while the final movement is one of Bach’s most joyous gigue, with a rondo theme recurring in a variety of guises.

Three Brazilian Pieces

In this set, LAGQ pays tribute to the rich sonorities and infectious rhythms of Brazil. Inspired by their collaboration in 2006-2007 with the brilliant singer Luciana Souza, LAGQ recorded a new CD of Brazilian music for the Telarc label. It opens with a tune by the idiosyncratic jazz musician Hermeto Pascoal, sometimes referred to as the “Frank Zappa of Brazil”; his Da Sábado pra Dominguinhas is a fine example of the endless fount of tunes and surprising harmonic changes that characterize his music. We follow this with a lovely tune by the great Heitor Villa-Lobos, one of Brazil’s most celebrated classical composers, and a favorite among guitarists. His A Lenda do Caboclo” (the Legend of the Native) was originally written for piano, and features a gently gliding melody interrupted by a bow to the French Impressionist school. Music of the iconic guitar virtuoso Baden Powell closes the set. His Samba Novo, a reaction against the wave of popularity of the gentler bossa novo style, is hard-driving and aggressive, with an extroverted melodic sense.
Program Notes continued

Opals
Phillip Houghton
Phillip Houghton (b. 1954) is one of the most recorded and influential Australian guitars composers. His work expresses a distinctly Australian aesthetic, reflecting the country’s vast landscapes and mystical “dreamtime” Aboriginal legends. He is famously a synesthete, wherein he sees very specific colors when he hears musical tones and timbres. Opals (1993, revised 2014) is a three-movement work for guitar quartet, and it attempts to capture the myriad glints and sparkles emanated by Australia’s opalescent national gemstone. In the score, there are detailed notes describing the particular colors and sheens that the music attempts to evoke. The composer provided the following notes for each movement:

Rather than being pitch-black, the black opal is a stone of fantastic colour. Electric reds, purples, blues and greens of every shade predominate and refract and collide, in a fiery rainbow of splinters of brilliant light against a dark matrix. One could say that the opal is “made” from water, and, in the “Water Opal” movement, I imagined a kaleidoscope of colour in and against a transparent “water matrix”...colours floating, bleeding into each other. Against a white matrix the lighter colours of the white opal are brilliant and translucent. Evident in this stone is what is called “pinfire” (glittering points of red and green) and the “rolling flash” (which describes the effect of layers of colour which, ripple abruptly and sparkle through the stone when the stone is moved).

William Kanengiser

Road to the Sun (2016)
Pat Metheny
Guitar is an interesting instrument. Across virtually all genres, it remains an ongoing research project—in the best possible sense. It is an instrument that in general is somewhat undefined by any single approach. There are seemingly infinite ways to deploy the potential of what it offers. And in multiples, those potentials grow exponentially.

A few years back, I was flattered to have one of my compositions included in the LAGQ’s Grammy-winning CD Guitar Heroes. Not long after that, the idea came up that I might someday write something new for them. The idea of writing a guitar quartet inspired by the talents of the LAGQ has been simmering somewhere in the back of my mind ever since. The thought of really addressing the instrument in a more formal way under the auspices of what this quartet has come to embody, not to mention the sheer, almost overwhelming individual skills of the four players, was something I really wanted to do. It was just a matter of finding the time I knew that I would need to do it.

Luckily for me, I am very busy as a bandleader and I feel privileged to be able to record and tour almost constantly with my own groups. But after a particularly active year in 2014 where I did more than 150 concerts around the world, I decided, for the first time, to take a year off from the road in 2015. Hopefully, I thought, I could get caught up with a few things. Kind of on my list was this lingering idea of finally writing something for the LAGQ. Near the end of the year, I saw a window opening up where I would have a few weeks that I might dedicate to this. With the approval of the guys and a few really useful tips from all of them, I jumped in, hoping to write a concert piece of seven to nine minutes. Two weeks later, I found myself with a nearly thirty minute, six movement treatise on the aforementioned potentials of what can happen in a multi-guitar format, blazingly inspired by the thought of hearing these four incredible guitarists play these notes. The piece just literally poured out.

In truth, as much as I am identified as being a guitarist myself, I don’t really spend a whole lot of time thinking about the instrument in a specific way. It has always been an almost inadvertent tool for me
Program Notes continued

to translate ideas into sound, and mostly as an improviser at that. And in fact, when I do compose for various projects or for my bands, I almost always am doing it at the piano, a much more forgiving and logical universe to write in than the odd geometry of guitar-thought. But for this piece, I decided to really embrace the instrument and kind of get under the hood of a bunch of things that I do with the instrument, things that are somewhat identified with what it seems has now become my particular style, while at the same time reaching for the narrative element of storytelling that is the imperative and primary function for me always as a musician.

And yet, with the piece now complete, as much as those components provided an aspirational environment to work from, the main quality that I think the piece offers is the emotional journey it takes. Somehow through the challenge of writing for this unique platform and aiming it towards the hands of these especially talented players, I was able to get to a very personal area of what music itself is to me. It feels like a journey to me, almost a road trip in scale and scope.

In settling on the title Road to the Sun, I thought back to my trip up to Glacier National Park on the famous Going-to-the-Sun Road, the day after hearing LAGQ play live for the first time at a festival in Montana. It has been a thrill to get the chance to write for the amazing Los Angeles Guitar Quartet and I am very excited to hear what William, Scott, John and Matt will do on their journey with this work.

Pat Metheny, 2016

About the Artists

For over three decades on the concert stage, the members of the Grammy Award-winning Los Angeles Guitar Quartet (LAGQ) have continually set the standard for expression and virtuosity among guitar ensembles, while perennially redefining themselves in their musical explorations. As one of the most charismatic groups performing today, the LAGQ’s critically acclaimed transcriptions of concert masterworks provide a fresh look at the music of the past, while their interpretations from the contemporary and world-music realms continually break new ground. Their New Renaissance recording (2015) marks a return to early music themes with a distinctly modern aesthetic. Recent recordings also include Interchange, featuring concertos by Rodrigo and Assad, and The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote: Words and Music from the Time of Cervantes with guest actor Phil Proctor, on DVD. An extended tour of China, premiers of Road to the Sun, written for them by Pat Metheny, and returns to some favorite venues, are among highlights of the LAGQ's 2017-2018 season. The Los Angeles Guitar Quartet last performed at the Hopkins Center in 2007.

Connecting Artists to the Community

While at Dartmouth, the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet shared dinner and music with students and faculty at a residential house, and participates in a post-performance discussion. For more information on Hop Outreach & Arts Education, call 603.646.2010 or visit hop.dartmouth.edu/online/outreach.
Upcoming Events

Emerson String Quartet
Sat • September 30 • 8 pm
Nine-time Grammy winners bring luminous intellect, musicality and joy to Mozart, Beethoven and more.

Roomful of Teeth
Tue • January 9 • 7 pm
Grammy-winning group takes vocal music into “uncharted harmonic galaxies and timbres” (Philadelphia Inquirer) with a borderless repertoire encompassing singing traditions from around the globe.

For tickets or more info, call the Box Office at 603.646.2422 or visit hop.dartmouth.edu. Share your experiences! #HopkinsCenter

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