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Belated reviews Part 1: Baltimore Classical Guitar Society

By Tim Smith, November 1, 2012

“After more than three decades, the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet remains a formidable ensemble, both in terms of technical bravura and musical personality. John Dearman, William Kanengiser, Scott Tennant and newest member Matthew Greif demonstrated a tight rapport throughout a colorful program that covered classical and jazz repertoire with equal flair.”

Somehow, I have fallen farther behind than usual. I figure the best course now is to blame the Super Storm, since that might buy me some sympathy.

Besides, once that storm did hit, who was going to waste time reading my reviews of some musical events last weekend?

Well, just for the record, I do want to say a few words about two concerts I caught, starting Saturday night at Towson University, where the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet opened the Baltimore Classical Guitar Society's 25th anniversary season.

(I will subsequently report on the U.S. debut of Cuba's Schola Cantorum Coralina in Annapolis.)

After more than three decades, the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet remains a formidable ensemble, both in terms of technical bravura and musical personality. John Dearman, William Kanengiser, Scott Tennant and newest member Matthew Greif demonstrated a tight rapport throughout a colorful program that covered classical and jazz repertoire with equal flair.

A highlight was a suite from Stravinsky's "Pulcinella." This baroque-meets-20th-century score makes a fine fit for guitars, and the quartet made the most of Kanengiser's arrangement, producing a richly vibrant tone and articulating with admirable expressive nuance.

There was brilliant interplay between the guitarists in selections from de Falla's "El amor brujo" and Bryan Johanson's propulsive, percussive and witty "On All Fours."

Los Angeles Guitar Quartet

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A group of Brazilian pieces emerged in vivid detail. And it was cool to hear the guitarists switch into a persuasive jazz mode for classics by Miles Davis and John Coltrane (Greif did the arrangements); **they hit an especially cool groove in "So What" and explored the smoky, late night world of "Blue in Green" with impressive subtlety.**

Los Angeles Guitar Quartet