

# Frank Salomon Associates

Your partner for the most exceptional musical experiences

## The New York Times

### Guitar x Four = Flexible Sound to Fill a Hall

By Allan Kozinn, January 2, 2008

*“the performance was revelatory.”*

Andrés Segovia once described the guitar as an orchestra seen through a reversed telescope, a metaphor suggesting that his instrument’s comparatively small voice and subtle range of timbres offset the chordal and contrapuntal freedom it offers. In a New Year’s Eve concert at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y, the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet took Segovia’s observation to heart and tested a proposition of its own: that an ensemble of four guitars magnifies both sides of the equation, yielding far greater independence of movement and a louder sound as well.

On the second point the ensemble rigged the game. Four guitars are indeed louder than one, but the Los Angeles players — John Dearman, Matthew Greif, William Kanengiser and Scott Tennant — also used amplification to help them reach the back of the hall, as well as the balcony, where their sound was clear and distinct. Segovia, who argued that amplification robs the guitar of its poetry, would have wagged his finger.

But many classical guitarists use amplification these days in a concession to the practicalities of playing in large halls, and listeners generally concede that even if the microphone adds a slightly metallic edge to the instrument’s timbre, the trade-off in audibility is worth that cost.

In a way the group stacked the deck on the orchestral question too. Two of the program’s three orchestral transcriptions — Rossini’s “Barber of Seville” Overture and Rimsky-Korsakov’s “Capriccio Español” — use, or at least hint at, Spanish themes. However effective Spanish music may sound on other instruments, it invariably sounds more at home on the guitar.

That was clear from the opening notes of the Rossini. For the pairs of the grand orchestral chords that open the work, the quartet played the first with plucked solidity and the second with a rolled strum that evoked the rasgueado playing of the flamenco guitar. Rossini’s themes remain resolutely Italianate, for the most part, but every now and then a decidedly guitaristic effect offered a reminder that the work takes place in Seville.

The Rimsky-Korsakov also had its moments of resistance, patches in which the composer’s evocation of Spain bears a distinctly Russian accent. On four guitars the original’s explosive

Los Angeles Guitar Quartet

# Frank Salomon Associates

Your partner for the most exceptional musical experiences

bursts of color were muted somewhat, but much of the energy came through. And in the passages where Rimsky-Korsakov borrowed the modal, winding lines of Spanish folk music, **the performance was revelatory.**

Between the Rossini and the Rimsky-Korsakov the group gave a rich, sober account of Bach's "Brandenburg" Concerto No. 6. Balances went awry in the first couple of moments, but the players quickly had them under control, clarified initially murky textures and captured the music's solemn coloration, as well as its drive. The reading's best moments, though, were in the contrapuntal dialogues of the closing Allegro, played with energy and shapeliness.

The second half of the program was devoted to contemporary Brazilian music, much of it from the group's recent recording "LAGQ Brazil" (Telarc). Several works were drawn from the Brazilian jazz repertory, among them Baden Powell's bright-hued "Samba Novo," Antonio Carlos Jobim's "O Morro Não Tem Vez" and Marco Pereira's "Sambadalú." A few, like Clarice Assad's gracefully contrapuntal "Bluezilian" and Heitor Villa-Lobos's supple "Lenda do Caboclo," leaned more decisively toward classical models.

But this is a repertory in which barriers between classical, jazz and pop have long been abandoned, and in most of these works elements of classical structure, jazz harmonies and distinctively syncopated Brazilian rhythms are tightly intertwined. For the Pereira the quartet was joined by Katisse Buckingham, a flutist whose ornate improvisations transformed this vocal score into a virtuosic instrumental work.

In rhythmically vital works by Hermeto Pascoal and Paulo Bellinati, the guitarists and Mr. Buckingham (who also played the soprano saxophone) were joined by Annette A. Aguilar, an inventive percussionist.

## Los Angeles Guitar Quartet