

Guitar trio impresses crowd with fun and polish

The Kelowna Community Concert Association has done it again. So far, every performance of the 2016-17 season has been a winner.

On Tuesday night, Nov. 15, the concert by the Montreal Guitare Trio, the third in this year's series, was one of the most polished and surprisingly entertaining musical acts I've seen in quite a while.

I say surprisingly entertaining only because they included a lot of contemporary and less familiar material in their program, a risky move for any group, and one that can leave some audiences cold.

However, the deftness with which they arranged and performed every piece was highly appreciated and well received by the full house at the Kelowna Community Theatre, to the point that at the final dramatic chord of their closing piece, Garam Masala, the audience leapt to their feet faster than I've ever seen before.

Surprising indeed.

As for my comment on them being polished, that has many facets.

The trio of Marc Morin, Sebastien Dufour and Glenn Levesque have been playing together for more than 15 years, and with that amount of time, a band develops an intuition and flow that is readily apparent, especially when playing with a song's form or trading in improvisation, such as on Rio Ancho.

One could see a wealth of communication going back and forth, all in the most simple of glances or gestures.

Add to that the fact these three gentlemen were entertaining with their commentary and humour, not to mention bringing their own sound man to control every aspect of the sonic experience.

I found myself not noticing how much time had passed.

The program itself was fascinatingly diverse, from traditional, classical and Spanish influenced pieces, to Rush and Radiohead.

The Radiohead arrangement was one of my favourites and most effective, featuring Levesque's beautiful vocals (also featured on While My Guitar Gently Weeps).

All of the music was played with exemplary technical skill, while still having the energy some of those styles demand.

My main criticism is a small but important one. I felt that the electric bass was a little too loud in the mix and dominated the two guitars. (I would be curious to know why he chose an electric bass and not an acoustic model).

I could not write this without mentioning the encore. Often an encore is almost unplanned, a piece "just in case," but seldom as rehearsed.

In this case, their encore was one of the best works of the night, with the bassist adeptly switching to accordion.

Starting with a fun rendition of The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly, the trio morphed into some traditional Quebecois music, which had the crowd clapping along.

A brilliant ending to a very good evening of music.

Thank-you Betty Skilbeck for continuing to set a high standard for the Kelowna Community Concert Association and a big merci to the Montreal Guitare Trio for their music and energy.

Neville Bowman is a local musician, actor and composer.