

Melbourne International Guitar Festival

The first Melbourne International Guitar Festival, in Melbourne, Florida, took place at the Henegar Center for the Arts on February 19 – 20, 2010. Guitarists Ruben Gonzalez from Cuba / Dominican Republic, Marcelo Coronel from Argentina, Alfredo Muro from Peru, and the Mayes Guitar Duo from The United States performed two concerts and gave master classes in the Arts center in historic downtown Melbourne.

On Friday Night, The Mayes Guitar Duo played the first half of the evening's concert, playing a program of music for renaissance lutes and classical guitars which included "On the Heath" which was written for the duo by Ronn McFarlane, and "Shenandoah" written for them by Howard Vance. Alfredo Muro played the second half of the concert and presented a wide variety of exciting music from all over South America. Muro has a special feeling for Brazilian music, and demonstrated this with a stellar performance of "El Condor Passa" by D. Robles.

On Saturday, Marcelo Coronel played the first half of the concert, playing his own compositions. This performer/composer is rapidly making an impression on the guitar community with his fine playing and artful compositions – This concert was an apt demonstration of the prodigious skills of both player and composer. The second half was played by Cuban-born guitarist Ruben Gonzalez, who presented a varied program of music for solo guitar, followed by two duos played with Coronel, and finally by "Milonga Mafioso," a quartet, written by Marcelo Coronel and performed by Gonzalez, Muro, Coronel, and the Mayes Duo as a finale to the entire festival.

During the festival, audiences were large and appreciative – demanding and getting encores and curtain calls from the various players. One of the highlights of the festival for this writer was the appearance in the audience of legendary luthier, Manuel Valasquez.

There are lots of people responsible for this event, and whos support cries out for special mention; not the least of which is Nancy Crofton, director of the Henegar Center. There is also sponsorship by the Brevard County Board of County Commissioners through the Brevard Cultural Alliance, Inc., and the City of Melbourne. A special thank you must be given to Dr. Jose Pepen for his support, encouragement, and hospitality.

Throughout the weekend, the performers were treated to fantastic Cuban Cuisine at the restaurant, Ambia Cubano. The proprietor, Alfredo Hernandez regaled us with tales of historic proportion regarding his escape from Cuba and subsequent adventures, while feeding us copious amounts of Cuban delicacies. The atmosphere was warm and friendly, the food delicious, and the proprietor's wife who doubled as cook and waitress, looked like a younger and prettier Uma Thurmon. There is talk of making this festival an annual event. If this comes to fruition, I encourage everyone in the central Florida Atlantic Coast to attend.

Bios