

MUSIC

Wortham stage welcomes Quarteto Nuevo

Courtesy of the Wortham Center

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Weaving jazzy, mesmerizing rhythms over lightly rumbling percussion, Quarteto Nuevo creates enchanting soundscapes that fuse together many cultures, past and present, around the world.

Now, on Nov. 4, this multicultural quartet is bringing its global-fusions to downtown Asheville, for a performance at the Wortham Center for the Performing Arts.

Merging multitudes of musical styles — from western classical to eastern European folk, Latin to jazz, and traditional influences from both India and Mexico — the ensemble is known to pack a punch on a global scale, “utilizing the sounds and instruments of ancient worlds and faraway places with a contemporary groove,” according to LA Weekly.

“Quarteto Nuevo is what we call a world chamber-jazz ensemble,” said Damon Zick, the ensemble’s soprano saxophonist and woodwind player. “We take influence from the classical chamber music world, from the jazz world — and all over the world — to combine into our own unique sound.”

Kenton Youngstrom, the group’s acoustic guitarist, added: “There’s such a rich combination of instru-

ments (in this style of music). I really love the challenge of making new versions of pre-existing pieces for this ensemble.”

Zick and Youngstrom are joined in the quartet by cellist Jacob Szekely and hand percussionist Felipe Fraga, each of whom share a passion for creating compositions that transcend time and place. With a wide-ranging repertoire — from Heitor Villa-Lobos’ “Bachianas Brasileiras” and Chick Corea’s “Children’s Song No. 6” to traditional Macedonian “Gadjarsko” and original compositions by the ensemble members — Quarteto Nuevo’s programs often feel nostalgically familiar yet wholly original, reimagining classical works through unique instrumentation and a modern lens.

“You can kind of think of Quarteto as a musical melting pot,” Szekely explained. “And unlike most traditional chamber, jazz or world groups, Quarteto Nuevo’s members all come from completely different worlds. It’s a difference that we think the audience can really pick up on. It’s exciting for us *and* for the people listening to the music.”

Fraga said he believes one of the band’s strongest qualities is each of its members’ talent for improvisation. “You’re never going to see the same show twice,” he said.



Quarteto Nuevo is scheduled to perform Nov. 4 at the Wortham Center. STEVE STEINHARDT



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