



## Music of the Americas: Live at Americas Society

By Ernest Barteldes

**Guitar in the Americas**  
**Americas Society**  
**New York, NY**  
**July 7, 2009**

The Mannes Guitar Summit kicked off in early July with a presentation of artists of diverse backgrounds and formations, ranging from classical music to tango, with some folk in between at the Upper East Side's Americas Society. The concert was also the beginning of the Mannes College's summer program.

The showcase started with Duo Cantabile, formed by the married couple Lauri (voice) and Mariano Aguirre (guitar) who presented a selection of Mexican folkloric songs seen from a classical perspective. They opened with "Canciones Arcaicas," a potpourri of old melodies, all sewn together in one piece with short intervals. That was followed by the instrumental "Montebello," a number composed by Julio César Oliva to bring awareness to the devastation in Central America's rainforests. Closing their short set was the poignant "La Llorona," a tune that describes a wailing woman who cries for the loss of her loved one.

Up next was Tibaguí Trio, a New York-based group formed by three Colombian musicians under the leadership of mandolinist Alejandro Florez with Sebastián Cruz (tiple) and Nilko Andreas (guitarra). The trio performed an innovative blend of Andean and classical music with a jazz approach, including plenty of improvisation around original and traditional melodies. Among the highlights of their presentation were "Porro," a number adapted from a percussion arrangement to a solo guitar feature for Andreas that was reminiscent of the work of late Brazilian guitarist Baden Powell. Florez performed one of his own compositions, the sweet-sounding "Flores Secas," which was inspired by the traditional songs he learned as a child in his native country.

After a brief intermission, the Newman & Oltman Guitar Duo took the stage, opening with "Nocturne-Fantasy, Opus 69" by Lowell Lieberman. The nearly twelve-minute long composition is free-form including complex time and chord changes. The two guitars complemented each other, often finishing a solo where another one left off. They contrasted that with a relaxed rendition of Lennon & McCartney's "Fool on The Hill." The arrangement was reminiscent of Egberto Gismonti's work, as the juxtaposition of the two guitars created a dissonant chordal landscape.

The night closed with tango by Cuban-born Rene Izquierdo (guitar) and Ana Ruth Bermúdez (cello), who played modified arrangements to two movements of Astor Piazzola's "History of Tango." The piece was clearly very demanding, and Bermúdez appeared to struggle with the tempo changes. Originally written for flute and guitar, the highly dramatic piece worked well in this format, and the audience responded with great applause.

The evening served as a wonderful appetizer for the summit, which took place at the Mannes College from July 8 to 12 with several performances by some of the same artists present at the Americas Society.