



(From left): Eduardo Martin, Galy Martin, Frank Koonce, Elina Chekan, Adam Levin, Mesut Ozgen, Iliana Matos, Carlos Rafael Rivera, Rene Izquierdo, and Martin Pedreira

A Lo Cubano! A Report from This Year's Miami International GuitART Festival

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In 2016, the first edition of the Miami International GuitArt Festival started out with a limited budget. However, festival director, guitarist, composer, and program coordinator of guitar studies at Florida International University, Mesut Özgen, managed to attract audiences from Day One with a program that still resonates. Now, three years later, the festival has become a must-attend for many guitar aficionados at the East Coast. This year, the festival featured artists such as Eduardo Martin, Rene Izquierdo, Illiana Matos, Edel Muñoz, Martin Pedreira ... You've guessed it, this year's edition was all about the Cuban vibe! As many of you know, Cuba is a mere 228 miles (367 km) across the Caribbean from Miami, and southern Florida has a huge Cuban population, so Cuban culture is deeply ingrained there.

As with previous years, GuitArt Festival audiences were able to attend concerts, master classes, a luthier expo, workshops, lectures—and world premieres. Once again the MIGF included a composition competition, and the new addition of the guitar performance competition is hopefully here to stay.

The opening concert, "A Lo Cubano," perfectly embodied Chopin's often quoted remark that "Nothing is more beautiful than a guitar, except, possibly two" by featuring guitar solo and duo music by Leo Brouwer, Antonio Rojas, Ernesto Lecuona, Eduardo Martin and Carlos Fariñas. A world premiere of Fredrick Kaufman's *Catalan Concertante* for guitar quartet also took place that evening.

Afternoon concerts were programmed and featured artists such as Edel Muñoz (Cuba), Nutavut Ratanakarn (Thailand), and Pierre Bibault (France). Eliot Fisk, Adam Levin, and Iliana Matos presented solo evening concerts. Each of these artists displayed contrasting styles and convinced audiences of the possibilities and wide palette of colors our instrument has to offer—from avant-garde works by Orlando Jacinto Garcia and Zad Moultaqa to classical guitar standards by Dionisio Aguado and J.K. Mertz; from Baroque works by Bach and Scarlatti to a variety of *contradanzas* and original works by various Cuban composers.

Festival attendants were able to sit in on lectures and workshops by Frank Koonce, David Dolata, Martin Pedreira, Sean Samimi, and Momcilo Aleksandric covering topics such as the ergonomics of guitar-playing, music management and business, Baroque guitar tablature, and aspects of making a recording. Many of these events led to interesting open-table discussions; the composers panel certainly being one of them. If this wasn't enough, the MIGF offered master classes free to the public and taught by festival artists such as Marcin Dylla, Eliot Fisk, Rene Izquierdo, Iliana Matos, Martin Pedreira, and Adam Levin.

A Leo Brouwer tribute concert, spanning the maestro's vast repertoire from a composition career already lasting more than 60 years, was programmed on the third day of the festival. Some highlights of the evening were soloist Eren Süalp with his interpretation of the *Concierto Elegiaco* for guitar and orchestra, *La Mitología de las Aguas* for flute and guitar performed by the Wabi-Sabi duo, and the guitar quintet starring festival director Dr. Özgen with the Amernet String Quartet.

On Friday, the world premiere of *Concierto a Tres* by Carlos Rafael Rivera took place. Commissioned by the MIGF, each movement is dedicated to a different guitar player. Iliana Matos graciously offered to perform the movement dedicated to Denis Azabagic (who was unable to attend) for its premiere. The other two dedicatees and performers were Rene Izquierdo and Marcin Dylla. The *Concierto* accessibly presented the Afro-Cuban and Pan-American idioms to a broader audience. Throughout the week, conductor Javier Jose Mendoza and the Florida International University Symphony Orchestra worked closely with the featured composer and the artists.

Here's a fantastic treat: The MIGF performance of *Concierto a Tres*, featuring (in order) guitarists Rene Izquierdo, Marcin Dylla, and Iliana Matos:



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Winner of the 2018 MIGF composition competition, Hakkı Cengiz Eren, used microtonal tunings of a single string in his *Three Portals*. Performance of the winning composition, played by Peruvian guitarist Celso Cano, took place on Saturday.

The performance competition was programmed to span the festival's last three days. The finalists performed at the Herbert and Nicole Wertheim Performing Arts Center where all concerts of the festival took place. The winners were: 1. Marko Topchii from Ukraine, 2. Jihyung Park from South Korea, 3. Momcilo Aleksandric from Serbia, and Jesus Serrano from Mexico. Those finalists (and others) set a very high standard from the first round to the last.

The closing concert once again set the Cuban mood with Duo Martín—Eduardo Martín and daughter Galy have been performing together since 200; and an extra treat was that many of the compositions they played are yet to be notated and published. They are certainly a duo to keep an eye open for.

Upcoming announcements for the 2019 edition can be found at: migf.fiu.edu

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