

Miami International GuitART festival kicks off Feb. 24

Posted by Gisela Valencia · 02/23/2016 at 11:54 am

 Tweet



Mesut Özgen's Guitar Ensemble Class giving passersby a taste of the GuitART Festival in the Graham Center

Get ready to experience a celebration of guitar culture, jam-packed with guitar concerts, lectures and a showcase of finely crafted guitars at the **Miami International GuitART Festival (MIGF)**.

Hosted and organized by FIU's School of Music, the festival runs Feb. 24-28 and features opportunities for music enthusiasts to learn more about the guitar.

"In addition to helping our students prepare for life as professional musicians, our main purpose is to also serve the local community and bring them the highest quality music written for the guitar and other instruments," says Mesut Özgen, artistic director of the festival and School of Music professor.

The festival includes 11 concerts with local and international artists such as Benjamin Verdery and Miami Guitar Trio. Özgen's Guitar Ensemble class will also perform during the Guitar Orchestra Concert on Feb. 27.

Felipe Carvajal, one of the students in Özgen's class, along with his Flamenco group will be performing Carvajal's compositions for the festival finale. The performance includes a flamenco dancer and singer, percussionists, jazz basses and a violinist.

"It's music that has been in my head," says Carvajal, who is currently also working on his soon-to-be-released solo CD. "I wanted to get all those ideas, put them together and make a project."

He adds: "From what I know, it's been a long time since there has been something like this [festival] in Miami." Carvajal, who is from Costa Rica, says he sees this festival as a way to encourage people to learn more about the guitar and boost the growing Miami guitar community.

The Luthiers Expo will also set up shop at the **Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum** during the festival. Luthiers and guitar shops will present a collection of hand-made guitars from Spanish, European and American guitar makers, with opportunities for enthusiasts to play and purchase the guitars.

The icing on the cake for many students: the learning experiences to hone their skills.

"I'm looking forward to the master classes the most," says music business major Thomas Caprara. In master classes, music students or enthusiasts perform in front of an experienced musician who gives them feedback. During master classes, the audience can watch the performance and learn alongside the performer.

Caprara adds that being part of the ensemble class itself is also a learning experience. "You usually don't get to play with other guitarists. It helps you become a better musician, become aware of the other voices and facets. It's a whole other aspect of performing."

Özgen says this festival is all about fostering enrichment and education: "By doing the festival and activities we want to contribute to the art of the guitar – to celebrate the art of the guitar by bringing international artists... and giving our students professional experience to participate in the festival and to study with experts."

The opening reception is Wednesday at 5 p.m. at the **Herbert and Nicole Wertheim Performing Arts Center** rotunda; at 7:30 p.m. in the concert hall, Özgen and alumni Celso Cano will perform the opening concert.

For more information on the festival and a schedule of events, click [here](#) and to buy event tickets online click [here](#).

If you're new here, you may want to subscribe to our [newsletter](#). Thanks for visiting!