

String quartet to bring high-energy act to Shelton

By Dana Kampa
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It's a good thing the Pacific Northwest has plenty of coffee, because Domenic Salerni of Dalí Quartet hinted it's the key to pulling together the string quartet's high-energy performance. Well, that and a lively combination of "classical roots with Latin soul."

"When you're doing something that you're passionate about, it brings a certain energy," Salerni said. "We try to program pieces that are intrinsically exciting."

The group performs at 7 p.m. Friday at Shelton High School's Performing Arts Center as part of the Live On Stage concert series. Salerni said attendees should prepare to enjoy a new take on classic music.

Adriana Linares, viola, and Carlos Rubio, second violin, formed the group in 2004 in Philadelphia when they were inspired by the works of Spanish surrealist Salvador Dalí. The city was celebrating the 100th anniversary of Dalí's birth, and the four letters of his name corresponded with the founding members' names. Salerni later joined in 2016 on the first violin, and Jesús Morales offered the cello.

Though he wasn't part of the group when it formed, Salerni remembered his brush with Dalí's art around that time.

"I was auditioning for a school in Philly, and my mom took me to the [Philadelphia Museum of Art], and they had this incredible retrospective of Dalí, but it was sold out," Salerni laughed.

Salerni said joining the quartet was especially meaningful considering he and Linares knew each other as teenagers.

"Here we are, coming together to work as adult colleagues, and we all clicked," he said. "She's an incredible force of nature, and has been an incredible inspiration not only for the quartet, but for me personally."

As for what makes the quartet work together so well, Salerni said it originates from camaraderie on and off stage.

"I think everyone has an incredibly collegial attitude," he



Dalí Quartet offers a fusion of Latin American and classical music on Friday at the Shelton High School Performing Arts Center as part of the Mason County Concert Association's Live On Stage series. The quartet includes from left, Carlos Rubio, Domenic Salerni, Adriana Morales and Jesús Morales. Photo courtesy of Live On Stage

said. "We all share a similar view on life — that it's meant to be enjoyed, and there are all the finer points in life that we all are striving toward. Great food, great company, to laugh and to enjoy making music together. We share a lot of those values."

This is Salerni's second time touring with Live On Stage, and he said he appreciates traveling to communities throughout the country and using his training to play off of people's preconceived notions of classical music.

"Our mission is to introduce audiences to pieces of music that they might not have heard before," he said. "What makes the Dalí Quartet unique is that we're presenting either material that derives from the Latin American experience, or classical music written by Latino composers. I think there's sort of this misnomer or this idea that the canon of classical music is only German and Austrian and French and other European composers. That couldn't be further from the truth."

Salerni said in particular, he appreciates the talent of Argentinian composer Alberto Ginastera, Brazilian com-

poser Heitor Villa-Lobos and contemporary Venezuelan composer Efraín Amaya.

Performing pieces from the 1930s and '40s as well as contemporary compositions helps illustrate the longstanding history of Latin American musicians' contributions to the fine arts, though they may not be as widely recognized.

"We're trying to kind of break open the notion of that canon, and also present works that might be new and exciting for an audience that's used to sort of a certain flavor of music," Salerni said.

For the Shelton performance, many of the pieces in the first half are based on folk dance songs. Juan Ramírez' 2002 "Suite Latina for String Quartet" includes the "Danza Morena," a piece based on the five-note cluster rhythm popular in Mexican music. Salerni said Ramírez, a violinist in the Atlanta Symphony, is a good friend, and the quartet enjoys bringing his works to life. For those unfamiliar with his work, Salerni likened it to Ramírez' mole sauce — stuffed with as many homegrown peppers as the music has steps.

The rapid-fire pace of the pieces contributes to the quartet's high-energy perfor-

mance, frequently described as lively enough to make listeners want to get up on their feet and dance.

Villa-Lobos' "String Quartet No. 5" is unique in the way it takes folk material and elaborates on the source material. Like Ludwig van Beethoven, Villa-Lobos wrote 17 string quartets, and his fifth stands out for translating popular children's lullabies into concert pieces.

"They're tunes like 'Row, Row, Row Your Boat,' where anyone would know it," Salerni said. "What Villa-Lobos is trying to do in this quartet is paint a musical portrait of life in Brazil."

In the other approach to the music fusion, the quartet plans to bring a Latin American-influence to Hugo Wolf's "Italian Serenade" and Beethoven's "String Quartet in C major, Op. 549, No. 3." Salerni said given Wolf was an Austrian composer with an Italian style, there was already some cultural crossover among musicians at the time within Europe.

"This sort of fluency of many different cultures is really interesting," he said, noting that the Beethoven people know today found much of his

IF YOU GO:

What: Dalí Quartet
When: 7 p.m. Friday
Where: Shelton High School, 3737 N. Shelton Springs Road
Cost: \$30
For more information: Call 360-426-1842

success after moving to Vienna. The quartet is simply taking it one step farther.

Salerni said the quartet enjoys bringing together different influences and cultures through music in a new way.

In addition to their work performing, the group emphasizes giving back to the music community. Linares and Rubio organized the annual Dalí Quartet International Music Festival in 2004 with the mission to coach students at all levels. Salerni said teaching the aspiring musicians makes him feel grateful for the experience he gained studying at the Yale University School of Music and Cleveland Institute of Music, though it wasn't always an easy path, and he values being in a position to help build up young musicians.

"I'm looking at a population that for a large part doesn't have the same sort of education that I've had at the pre-college level," he said. "What we're trying to do as the Dalí Quartet, but also me personally, is trying to bridge some of those gaps. There are a lot of talented people out there, and the only things that bar someone from success are hard work and access."

Salerni said helping these students find their paths to success now while hopefully put them in positions to empower their own communities in the future.

The 2019-20 Live On Stage series kicks off April 26 with The Malpass Brothers, a group specializing in traditional country classics in the vein of Johnny Cash, Marty Robbins and Merle Haggard. Call 360-426-1842 to learn more about upcoming performances. To learn more about Dalí Quartet, visit www.daliquartet.com.