On Oktober 19, 2014, I went to the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet concert at Chenery Auditorium.

I walked in at 7:45pm to the musicians warming up. At eight, all the musicians stopped playing for a few seconds, and then started playing again. I’m still wondering exactly why they stopped. After this, I looked at the concert’s program. We were first to enjoy Debussy’s Nocturnes, followed by Assad’s Interchange which would be accompanied by the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet. After this piece, there would be an intermission followed by Bizet’s Symphony No. 1 in C Major. After the performance, there would be coffee, tea, and donut holes in a small room. Our conductor for the night would be Raymond Harvey.

At about ten past eight, the conductor came on stage. I noticed he shook the hand of a violinist, and that got me wondering: why that specific violinist? Why not everybody else? I think it was because that violinist is where the first violin would sit, but I’m not sure.

At this point, the musicians played a few notes to make sure they were in tune. After a few seconds, the conductor waved them off, and signaled to begin playing the first piece of Nocturnes, called Nuages, or Clouds. I specifically mention this piece because I wrote down a few things about this movement. First, I thought it very calming. With the dimmed lights, the music made me feel like I was outside in a field looking at the nighttime sky. This movement was very quiet, reminisce of being alone outside in a rural area. I thought it was very good.

The second movement of Nocturnes, called Fetes or Festivals didn’t really grab me like the first movement did. The music was that of joy, of a party, of a festival going on. I did feel like I was in a festival, but the trumpets kept ruining that feeling. During this movement, it sounded like the trumpets were out of tune. I noticed it during the quiet bit of the movement, and it just didn’t sound right to me.

Once Nocturnes was over, the conductor walked off stage for a few moments. At this time, a few stage hands came on with four chairs, some microphones, and small foot-stools for the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet. Then, the conductor came back out, and introduced the four guitarists as they came on stage and sat down. They sat directly behind the conductor, facing towards the audience.

Then, the guitarists tuned their instruments, and prepared to play. They took a few minutes to make sure they were tuned, and the conductor signaled to the orchestra to re-tune themselves so the guitarists could be in tune with the orchestra.

After the quick tuning session, the conductor signaled to begin playing. The guitarists had to turn around to see the conductor give time and signal the start. I watched the guitarists play, and noticed that they were very talented. They played chords and notes in a manner I am not able to, and I’ve been practicing the technique I saw them use. Using their acoustic guitars, the guitarists were able to produce a surprising range of notes and sounds as each guitar was different. I don’t really think the guitars should have been accompanied by the orchestra for the symphony they played. I know Interchange was specifically composed for the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet, but it just didn’t sound right. I sounded like two different pieces of music that happened to work well together. I did like a few of the quick guitar solos, though, as they emphasized the skill of the players.

After Interchange, there was a quick 10 minute intermission during which I used the rest room. When I came back, I found that the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet had left, and their chairs and foot stools had been removed. As it turns out, the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet was only there to play Interchange. This disappointed me greatly as I was there mainly to see the Quartet.

After the intermission, the conductor came back on stage, and signaled the orchestra to start playing Bizet’s Symphony No. 1 in C Major. From the description in the pamphlet, this symphony was written when Bizet was around seventeen and studying at a Conservatory. It was for a relatively small orchestra, and mainly meant to be a student exercise.

I very much liked the second movement, Adagio. Even though I don’t like oboes, as I think they sound like geese, I did like the oboe solo. It sounded rather sad, as if something tragic had happened. The third movement, Allegro vivace, was very interesting. There were three clear parts, with the middle part being the best. It sounded like bagpipes were playing.

Sadly, just after the last movement began I had to leave as my stomach was giving me problems. From what I read in the pamphlet, the last movement was vibrant and very active. I’m happy I missed it as I don’t particularly like loud, fast-paced string music. That’s the only type of symphonic music I really dislike.

All in all, I liked the performance, but I was disappointed that the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet only played during one composition.