



ARTICLE BRIDGET GREY | PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED

This month, Valle Musico will be playing at the Pumpkin Jazz and Roots Festival in Basalt. If you haven't heard this local guitar-based world music quintet – or even if you have – you might want to catch that October 17 performance.

Valle Musico was founded by John Ramo, who began playing as a guitar duo with Pat Winger about three years ago. Not long after the two started performing at Steve's Guitars in Carbondale, they were introduced to bass player Bruce Imig by local musician Chris Bank. Ramo then heard Brett Gould playing Middle Eastern drums at the Gandhi restaurant in Carbondale while his wife Sandra entranced Ghandi's diners with her belly dancing.

The combination of guitars and percussion sounded a chord with Ramo, who owned a recording studio in Washington, D.C. before moving to Colorado in 1997. "In D.C., we recorded a lot of musicians who were African and worked for Paul Simon," Ramo recalls. Among them was Okyerema Asante, a master drummer from Ghana. Famed for performing all the parts of a traditional five-person drum group by himself, Asante an expert on traditional Ghanaian talking drums. "He was working with Paul Simon around the time that Simon was working on his *Graceland* album. Asante invited me to a party at Paul Simon's apartment, and I got to spend some time with him."

Paul Simon told Ramo that for him, music was essentially about "guitars and percussion." That theme has laid down the major tracks for Valle Musico's musical collaboration.

For the past year and a half, Valle Musico has been delving into the improvisational and notated aspects of classical, jazz and world-beat musical genres, using guitars and percussion to blend, combine and fuse different styles and traditions. "Our music is danceable because we want that world fusion music groove," says Ramo. "But whether people dance or not depends on the venue.

We played sit-down concerts at the West End music series in Christ Episcopal Church in Aspen this summer. But when we opened the summer music series in Carbondale, people danced on the lawn."

The group includes Pat Winger, who plays nylon and steel guitars, and who has been playing in bars and clubs since he was 14. After high school, Winger went on the road with a Filipino band playing Polynesian and Top 40 dance music. Other influences he brings to Valle Musico come from having played with an Iranian band that performed Persian and Arabic music and from having been a member of a serious blues band.

Bassist Bruce Imig, who grew up in Boulder, Colorado, has also been a part of many different musical genres. "I feel very fortunate to have played with many different song writers," he says. "Every musical experience helps you grow and learn, and that's what it's all about."

Gould, the group's percussionist, played with several internationally known artists while living in Los Angeles. Since 2008, he's been playing a Middle Eastern drum called a doumbek. In addition to playing with Valle Musico, he plays drum kit with a group called New Shoes, and he also plays for belly dancers.

John Ramo, who plays nylon string and classical guitar, studied and taught classical guitar in Washington D.C. at George Washington University. He has composed for film and video and created the theme for the long-running PBS news show "The McLaughlin Report." Lured to the Roaring Fork Valley in part by annual skiing trips and in part by a long friendship with Jazz Aspen-Snowmass producer James Horowitz, Ramo and his wife Jolie worked with John Denver on PBS film called "In Partnership with Earth" prior to the singer's death in 1997.

Valle Music has been working with Dave Taylor to record a CD at Carbondale's Cool Brick Studio, and it should be done in time for Valle Musico's performance in Willits on the 17th of this month. The CD will also be available on Valle Musico's website: ValleMusico.com.