

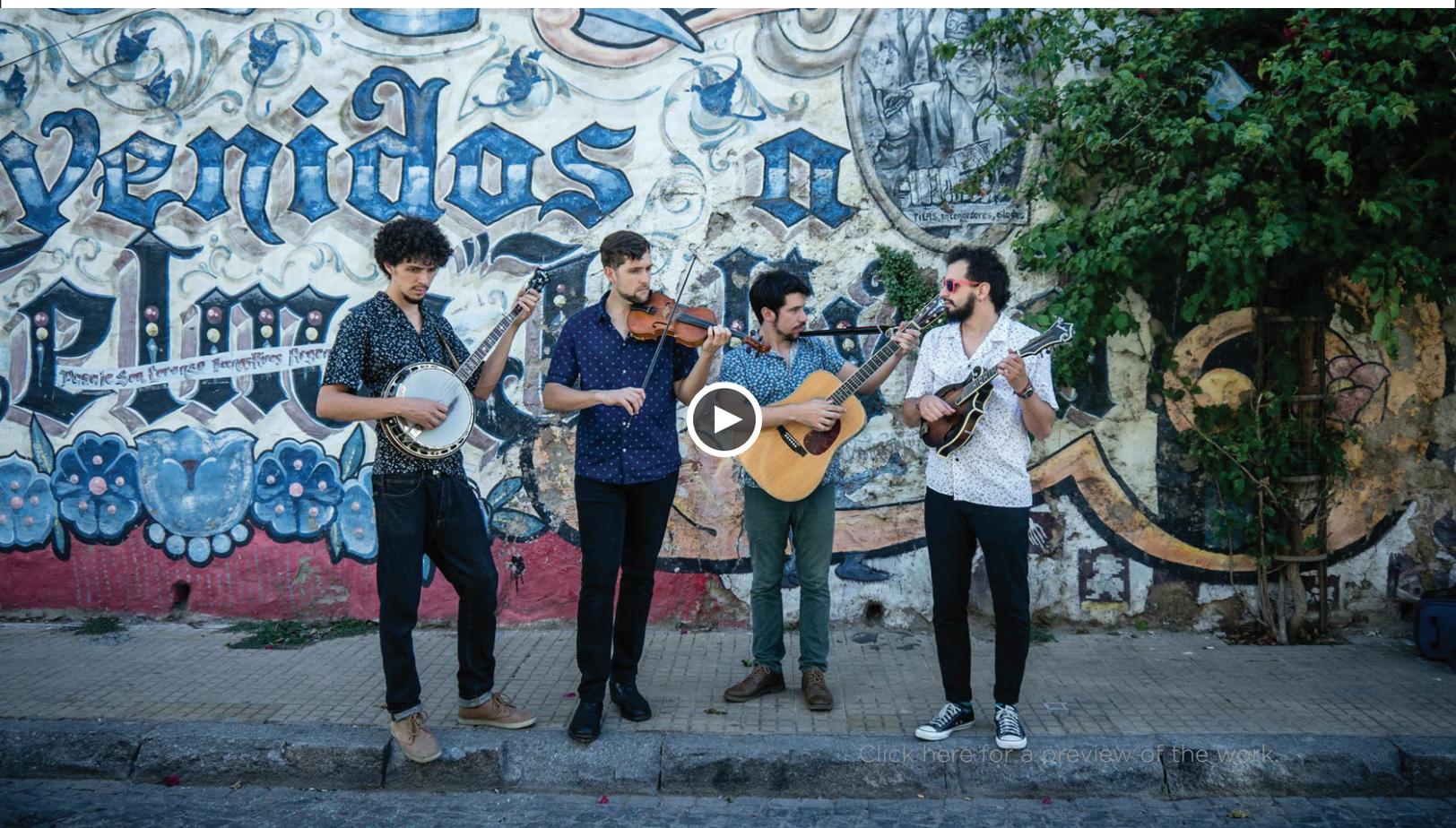
# Che Apalache

November 12, 2019



## Applause Series Inquiry Guide

# The Band



[Click here for a preview of the work.](#)

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Che Apalache is a four-man string band based in Buenos Aires that is composed of members from Argentina, Mexico and the United States.

North Carolinian Joe Troop is a fiddler and songwriter/composer, who moved to Argentina in 2010. Argentina natives Franco Martino (guitar) and Martin Bobrik (mandolin) and Mexico native Pau Barjau (banjo) began to take bluegrass and old-time style lessons with Troop. The four began performing together officially in 2013.

While they began as a bluegrass band, they inevitably incorporated Latin American styles into their music. They dubbed the new style “latingrass” – a combination of bluegrass and Latin music. Their appreciation of both musical traditions turned into celebration and even activism.

Troop identifies as queer, which further complicates his belonging to the traditionally conservative bluegrass tradition. He has made the decision to be intentionally open about his identity – to challenge and break down stereotypes and assumptions about who belongs and why.

“Che Apalache tries to put out things that are very intentional, to help people reflect who may not have had any exposure to certain belief systems before – and I’m referring to my own belief systems as well. [I want to] help this process along in some sort of way where people are obligated to think. If we can hook them in with artistic prowess and then challenge them to grow, that’s social art. That’s what we’re going for.”

- Joe Troop

# The Music



Fusing founder Joe Troop's bluegrass background and fiddle playing with traditional music from Latin America and other parts of the world, Che Apalache merges cultures to smash through the boundaries often set up around many types of folk music.

There are a whole slew of unspoken, subtle expectations about who has a claim to the roots of the music that are subverted by the existence of Che Apalache. As well as their insistence on being vocal about both their love of bluegrass and the complicated relationship they have with the traditional notions about who belongs -in the music, in the lyrics, and even who can be part of a country.

"I fell in love with bluegrass because it's amazing music, really. It's such a beautiful thing to have happened in the world. This instrumentation, this ensemble, I tend to think of it also outside of bluegrass, but bluegrass is what gave it technique, there's a lot of evolution that came from bluegrass. Don't get me wrong, I love bluegrass, but there are some social issues in the bluegrass world — but there are also things that are understandable, because it's an extension of American society. As American society continues to evolve and change, bluegrass is naturally going to do the exact same thing. It's kind of a self-evident history."

- Joe Troop

Music can bring people together. And for Che Apalache, this moment of division in the United States presents an opportunity. Troop notes, "The combination of the cultures - it's part of the story. It's part of the U.S. right now. So I'm happy it's happening."

"I want to use bluegrass as protest music. That's my M.O. — it's a genre of music people still listen to. . . There's a big scene out there. I felt like I could contribute to that."

# Glossary of Terms

Choose among the list below a few terms to focus on during the Che Apalache performance. Invite reflection about how the chosen terms were demonstrated in the music/performance.

**ARTICULATION:**

Characteristic way in which musical tones are connected, separated, or accented; types of articulation include legato (smooth, connected tones) and staccato (short, detached tones)

**BEAT:**

Underlying steady pulse present in most music

**BODY PERCUSSION:**

Use of the human body as an instrument to create percussive/rhythmic sounds such as stomping, patsching (patting thighs), clapping, clicking, snapping

**COMPOSER:**

One who creates music compositions

**CONNECTION:**

Relationship among artistic ideas, personal meaning, and/or external context

**CONTEXT:**

Environment that surrounds music, influences understanding, provides meaning, and connects to an event or occurrence

**CULTURAL CONTEXT:**

Values, beliefs, and traditions of a group of people that influence musical meaning and inform culturally authentic musical practice  
Culturally authentic performance: Presentation that reflects practices and interpretation representative of the style and traditions of a culture

**CULTURE:**

Values and beliefs of a particular group of people, from a specific place or time, expressed through characteristics such as tradition, social structure, religion, art, and food

**ELEMENTS OF MUSIC:**

Basic characteristics of sound (pitch, rhythm, harmony, dynamics, timbre, texture, form, and style/articulation) that are manipulated to create music

**ENSEMBLE:**

Group of individuals organized to perform artistic work, includes traditional, large groups such as bands, orchestras, and choirs as well as chamber or smaller groups, such as duets, trios, and quartets

**EXPRESSIVE INTENT:**

The emotions, thoughts, and ideas that a performer or composer seeks to convey by manipulating the elements of music

**FUSION:**

Type of music created by combining contrasting styles into a new style

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Conditions of the time and place in which music was created or performed and that provide meaning and influence the musical experience

**LYRICS:**

Words of a song

**PERSONAL CONTEXT:**

Unique experiences and relationships that surround a single person and are influenced by personal life, family, habits, interest, and preferences

**RHYTHM:**

Duration or length of sounds and silences that occur in music; organization of sounds and silences in time

**SOCIAL CONTEXT:**

Environment surrounding something or someone's creation or intended audience that reflects and influences how people use and interpret the musical experience

**STAGE PRESENCE:**

Performer's ability to convey music content to a live audience through traits such as personal knowledge of the repertoire, exhibited confidence, decorum, eye contact and facial expression

**STYLISTIC****EXPRESSION:**

Interpretation of expressive qualities in a manner that is authentic and appropriate to the genre, historical period, and cultural context of origin

**TEMPO:**

Rate or speed of the beat in a musical work or performance

**TIMBRE:**

Tone color or tone quality that distinguishes one sound source, instrument, or voice from another  
Excerpt From the National Core Arts Standards on Music

Excerpt From the National Core Arts Standards on Music

# Enduring Understandings

**Overarching (aka, “big”) ideas that are central to the core of the music discipline and may be transferred to new learning beyond the music.**

Artists use their personal/political/cultural/historical perspectives and experiences to shape their musical compositions and performances.

When we understand elements, structures and context of music we can “read” the music to understand the intent of the performance and ask deeper questions about purpose.

Seeking to understand a musician’s expressive intent is important for appreciating the work and creating personal meaning.

# Compelling Questions

**Compelling Questions deal with curiosities about how things work; interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts; and unresolved issues that require students to construct arguments in response.**

# Inquiry

## Research

Check out the resources on page 5 for articles and websites with information relevant to Che Apalache and the history of bluegrass to address the questions below.

- What do we know about the history and context of the type of music being performed? How does this performance add to the conversation in the genre? Does it replicate a tradition or do something new?
- What musical clues can you use to discern the intent or meaning of the music? Consider: volume, tempo, major or minor chords, facial expression and posture of the performer(s)?
- What can you “read” about the performance before/outside of the lyrics? How do the lyrics change/reaffirm your understanding of the music?
- What are the motivations of the musicians performing? How is their musical expression informed by their personal experiences? The influence of other art forms? Their racial, ethnic, religious, geographic, familial, sexual, and/or gender identities?

## Connect

Consider the questions below in written reflection and discussion. Do responses change after discussion? Do any shifts occur after the performance?

- What music do you respond to/like to listen to? What about that music connects you to it? If you perform music, what influences your decisions as a performer? How can others “read” your expressive intent when you are creating music?
- Who is in charge of the “meaning” of a piece of music? The listener, the performer, the composer, the song-writer, and/or the sound technician?
- Only people who are part of a religious/racial/cultural/ethnic group should be able to participate in the music of that group. Agree or disagree?
- Music is a good way to learn about culture. Agree or disagree?
- Music can be a factor in societal change. Agree or disagree?

# Guide Sources

## Read

Americana Artist You Need to Know: Che Apalache

<https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-country/che-apalache-bluegrass-rearrange-my-heart-870594/>

Connection Through Context (Teachers preview before sharing—contains mature content)

<https://cheapalache.com/blog/che-apalache-connection-through-context>

The Wall From Che Apalache

<https://bluegrasstoday.com/the-wall-from-che-apalache/>

Che Apalache's Joe Troop on Being Out in the Bluegrass Community: 'It's Very Much Taboo'

<https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/pride/8526218/che-apalache-joe-troop-interview-queer-in-bluegrass>

## Explore

<https://www.cheapalache.com/>

## Listen

NPR All Things Considered Interview

[www.npr.org/2018/08/14/638629428/che-apalache-hopes-to-open-minds-and-ears-with-their-latin-bluegrass-fusion](http://www.npr.org/2018/08/14/638629428/che-apalache-hopes-to-open-minds-and-ears-with-their-latin-bluegrass-fusion)

## Watch

The Wall

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypmUFL1QSs>

I've Endured

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmoOQiUHcRw>