

Mandrágora Tango

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One Line Description

Mandrágora: Nostalgic tango that stirs the soul and moves the feet.

One Paragraph Description

Mandrágora Tango is a vibrant collective of tango musicians based in Minneapolis. Mandrágora Tango is dedicated to preserving the nearly-lost musical forms of tango and translating them for today's listeners and dancers. Tango music defies categorization, living somewhere between classical, jazz and world beat. Mandrágora dances across those lines and creates a music that is fresh, engaging, danceable and nostalgic.



One Page Description

Mandrágora Tango is a vibrant collective of tango musicians based in Minneapolis. Mandrágora Tango is dedicated to preserving the nearly-lost musical forms of tango and translating them for today's listeners and dancers. Mandrágora Tango was founded by Bob Barnes in 2001 as a chamber music ensemble to play the music of Argentine composer and bandoneonist Astor Piazzolla. When he founded Mandrágora, Bob had no idea that people still danced to tango. Mandrágora soon fell into the Minneapolis tango dance scene and started playing for milongas (tango dance parties). In 2002 they started playing a weekly Sunday night milonga at the Loring Pasta Bar, a long-term gig that continues to this day. In 2003, Bob started to add a piano and a string quartet to the mix and created the "Mandrágora Tango Orchestra", a larger group dedicated to more symphonic tango styles. In 2005, Bob started to play the bandoneon, a squared-off accordion that is used for tango.

Tango can be described as classical music that can be danced to. A 3 minute love affair. A horizontal expression of a vertical desire. It is played on acoustic instruments and follows classical conventions, but has a strong beat, jazz harmonies and a nostalgic melancholy that is seldom encountered in the concert hall. Tango music defies categorization, living somewhere between classical, jazz, and Latin music. Mandrágora dances over those lines and creates a music that is fresh, engaging, danceable and nostalgic.

Mandrágora has appeared on Minnesota Public Radio, on Twin Cities Public Television, at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis, with the Vocalessence choir, with the Tony-winning Theatre de la Jeune Lune and at many other concert and dance venues in and around the Twin Cities. Mandrágora and Theatre de la Jeune Lune's co-presentation of Astor Piazzolla's tango-operita "Maria de Buenos Aires" was named "Best Overall Theater Work" for 2005 by City Pages of Minneapolis.

"Let's Have Dinner and Go Dancing With Mandrágora Tango" is a collection of tangos, vals (waltzes) and milongas (2-steps) recorded over the past year or so. The tracks range from rollicking guardia vieja (old style) tangos to lush epocha d'ora (golden age) ones, as well as some of Bob Barnes's originals and a curious tango version of Nirvana's Smells Like Teen Spirit. Mandrágora has also recorded a "neo-tango" version of the world's most famous tango, "La Cumparsita", mashed up with the "40-lashes" bass riff from "Jesus Christ Superstar". They refer to this version as "Tango electronica played on acoustic instruments".

Meet the Band:

Bob Barnes

Bob Barnes was born in Frankfurt, Germany and was raised in Gaithersburg, Maryland. Bob attended the Oberlin Conservatory of Music where he earned degrees in music composition and computer science. He moved to Minneapolis in 1994 to study computer science and biology at the University of Minnesota and dropped out a few years later to devote himself to music and menial computer jobs. Bob started playing tango in 1987 after hearing a recording of the Argentine composer and bandoneonist Astor Piazzolla. Bob nursed his tango addiction in private until 2001, when he sought out fellow tangophiles and founded Mandrágora Tango as a quartet of accordion, violin, bass and guitar. When he founded Mandrágora, Bob had no idea that people still danced to tango. He soon fell into the tango dance scene and started playing for milongas (tango dance parties). In 2002, Mandrágora started playing a weekly Sunday night Milonga at the Loring Pasta Bar, a long-term gig that continues to this day. In 2003, Bob started to add a piano and a string quartet to the mix and created the "Mandrágora Tango Orchestra", a larger group dedicated to more symphonic tango styles. In 2006, Bob started to play the Bandoneon, a squared-off accordion that is used for tango.



Laura Harada

Not much is known about Laura Harada. She was born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania on December 31, 1967. She studied violin since she was a little girl. Laura studied violin at the Oberlin conservatory at the same time that Bob was there, but they really didn't know each other. Laura's other musical passions include Arabic and Brazilian music. She is an accomplished Uud (Arabic lute) player..



Scott Mateo Davies

Scott Mateo Davies began studying guitar at age nine. Upon completing high school, he traveled extensively for four years, performing as a folk singer in diverse venues in London, Casablanca, Stockholm and New Delhi. After returning to Minneapolis, Davies founded the pop group "The Rogues", touring the Midwest for the next eleven years. While on the road, he began playing classical guitar. In 1982, Davies moved to Madrid where he began intensively studying flamenco guitar. Davies returns to Spain each year to perform and continue his studies. From 1986 to 1998 Davies was the featured guitarist and 'ud player for Voices of Sepharad, a musical group dedicated to performing the music and dance of Spanish Jewish culture. Scott became obsessed with tango after hearing a recording of Argentine composer and bandoneonist Astor Piazzolla. He recorded several Piazzolla compositions before joining Mandrágora in 2004.



Rahn Yanes

Born and raised in central California, Rahn became a bass-playing musician at age 11, got his first music job in the local philharmonic at 16, and hasn't stopped ever since. He played in most of the symphony orchestras throughout central California, eventually becoming Principal Bass and Personnel Manager of the Fresno Philharmonic, as well as teaching bass at Fresno State University. He also spent several years playing with the National Chamber Orchestra and the National Symphony Orchestra of Mexico. Moving to Minnesota several years ago allowed Rahn to expand his musical horizons, where he joined several different kinds of groups, including a jazz big band, a rock band, and most recently, Mandrágora Tango.

