



An invitation to a Castle salon

By Jean Bartlett
Tribune Writer

The sound is like a Viennese waltz, only faster, more present. The song being played is "Quiero ser tu sombra." It is a tango. Its title translates to "I want to be your shadow" and it is being played, impeccably, by Guillermo Garcia on guitar, Sascha Jacobsen on string bass and Adrian Jost on bandoneon. It is everything you want to hear in a tango – an embrace of music that puts all else aside but this moment.

These three men make up Trio Garufa. You can hear them play this song online. But more importantly, you can hear them perform in Pacifica as they present an evening of tangos that: span the classics of the Golden Era, journey the modern voice of maestro Astor Piazzolla, and dip masterfully into original compositions. On Saturday, October 20, the trio will perform in the drawing room of the Sam Mazza Castle. These intimate music salons were established at Pacifica's legendary castle in 2010 by Jeanette Cool, Executive Director of the Sam Mazza Foundation. The castle's history brings its own story to every performance.



Jean Bartlett photo

Jeanette Cool in the Mazza Castle drawing room. A photo of Sam Mazza looks over her shoulder.

In 1908, with construction nearly completed, Ocean Shore Land Company/Railroad attorney Henry McCloskey and his wife Emily moved into their Pacifica castle. To their specifications it had turrets and towers, 24 rooms, electrical wiring, gas pipes, beamed redwood ceilings and maple hardwood floors. But their happiness in their dream castle soon ended. Henry died in 1914 and in 1916, Emily and the couple's son moved to a ranch in Buttonwillow, California.

Since then, there have been numerous castle owners and dwellers – including several that were rather unsavory. In 1959, San Francisco painting and interior decorating contractor Sam Mazza bought the castle.

Sam did not live at his castle, but he threw many parties there. He was dedicated to its upkeep and filled it with an eclectic collection of objets d'art. Before his death at the age of 96 in 2002, he laid the groundwork to establish his estate as a private philanthropic foundation. Since its inception, the Foundation has granted \$6 million dollars to qualified 501(c)(3) organizations who work to improve their communities through the arts, education, or addressing quality of life concerns.

Cool, who has a Master of Music Theory from the University of Kansas, has been the Foundation's Executive Director since its inception. Her music background also includes serving as a church organist and choir director for 18 years.

"When I first moved to California back in the 1970s, musician friends of mine and I would hold music salons in our homes in the tradition of the European salon," she said. "In 2010, one of the Foundation grantees was an artist who played the qanun, a traditional Middle Eastern stringed instrument. He was also a student in need of some extra money. The idea of a music salon at the castle was discussed. It is another way to support working artists. That first salon was extremely well received. From that we built annual concerts. In 2019, the castle will host eight salons."

Leading up to the October 20 salon, this year's presenting artists have included: the intricate world style Musical Art Quintet; Greek composer and bouzouki player Orestis Koletsos; and tango duo, pianist Pablo Estigarribia and bandoneonista Adrian Jost.



Courtesy photo

Trio Garufa, l to r: Adrian Jost, Guillermo Garcia and Sascha Jacobsen.

Jost, a Pacifican by way of his native Switzerland, is also with Trio Garufa. Press reviews have called the trio's affinity for tango, "Dazzlingly and dizzyingly good."

"Tango is beautiful and powerful," Jost said. "It has so many layers, so many moods. It can be compared to the richness of classical music. It is never boring."

His instrument, the bandoneon, is often referred to as "the heartbeat of tango." It has a sound that haunts and teases. It is a type of concertina and its original intended use, in mid-19th century Germany, was to be a portable organ for religious services. That changed when it arrived in Argentina.

"The bandoneon is fragile and eccentric. It is unique and expressive, with a beautiful, velvety sound. It also has many moving parts." Out of practicality, due to a scarcity of repair shops outside of Argentina, Jost has learned to do repairs.

The bandoneonista's performance schedule is full and it includes playing with the San Jose Chamber Orchestra. This is the fourth time the trio has played the castle.

"Playing the castle is a wonderful experience," Jost said. "It's intimate. The acoustics are good. It provides a wonderful sense of history and a gorgeous view from the balcony."

The castle will offer one more salon this year on Saturday, November 17. It is an evening of Arab Spanish fusion performed by Latin Grammy nominated guitarist Gabriel Navia and Arabic violin virtuoso Georges Lammam. Their music is fiery and rhythmic and full of sand and dreams. They are an extraordinary listen.



Courtesy photo
Guitarist Gabriel Navia and violinist Georges Lammam.

Trio Garufa, www.triogarufa.com, plays tango, Saturday, October 20, at the Sam Mazza Castle, 900 Mirador Terrace, Pacifica. Doors open at 6 p.m. for a pre-concert gathering with wine and refreshments. Music starts at 7 p.m. The venue holds approximately 40 guests. Seats are \$40 and also include wine and refreshments at intermission. Details/directions at: www.sammazzafoundation.org. Mazza Castle Music Salon tickets are available at: <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/3195551>.

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