

WORLD MUSIC REVIEW

Sounds of Brazil, via Southland

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Author: Don Heckman

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Here's an idea for some of the Southland's numerous music presenters: In your quest to showcase music from around the world, don't overlook the diverse performers and ensembles available right here in Southern California.

That thought kept persisting during the performance Wednesday by Ted Falcon and the Los Angeles Choro Ensemble at the Vic in Santa Monica. One of the first presentations in the venue's dedication to unusual programming in the new "Fission Wednesdays" series, the Choro Ensemble's performance was enhanced by guest singer Katia Moraes, ukulele player Marvin Falcon and flutist Rebecca Kleinmann.

Choro is often labeled the "New Orleans jazz of Brazil" and there are similarities, most notably in the brisk rhythmic swing, the fast-paced, improvisation-like melodies and the melting pot blend of African rhythms with European harmonies. But choro icons such as Pixinguinha and Jacob do Bandolim took the music into even more adventurous arenas, in the process creating a uniquely Brazilian form of expression.

Ted Falcon, who is not Brazilian, is nonetheless fascinated by choro and has spent years dedicating himself to the music with an outsider's passion. His performance at the Vic offered selections from his new album, "Memorias do Brasil," a fascinating assemblage of classic choro and new originals driven by his mandolin and violin

skills and rich compositional insights.

Among the highlights: a dynamic solo-driven romp through Do Bandolim's "Assanhado" featuring Mitchell Long's electrifying playing of the cavaquinho (a small four-string guitar), and Falcon's own "Choro Novo," with its combination of complex harmonies and shifting rhythms.

The guest performers added more spice to the proceedings. Marvin Falcon (Ted's jazz musician father) called for a musical shift of gears with a Hot Club of France-inspired jazz take on "Lady Be Good." Kleinmann's warm toned, lyrical flute offered a colorful contrast to the fast-paced clarinet work of Andy Connell.

And Moraes' singing, as always, was a virtual definition of the passion that is an implicit part of Brazilian music.

Credit: Special to The Times

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