



The sections in bold indicate where streaming music samples of the songs are included in the review.

Euro Folk Champions

*Apollo Chamber Players -
impress HOWARD SMITH*

'... this scantily adorned traditional music derives straight from the heartbeat of regions in Southern, Eastern, and Central Europe.'

With ten traditional tracks and three known composers — Neopolitan Eduardo di Capua, Cuban Ernesto Lecuona and Canadian/American Karim Al-Zand — Apollo Chamber Players (ACP) steers clear of the outright Subcarpathian dances favoured by Liszt and Brahms or Zorba's Aegean sounds from Mikis Theodorakis. Similarly we hear little of Neopolitan rhythms written by Gaetano Monti or *Le tricorne* effects popularized by Manuel de Falla.

In other words this scantily adorned traditional music derives straight from the heartbeat of regions in Southern, Eastern, and Central Europe. The Wallachian lament (track 1) picks up its tempo in true Romanian style as does the soulful pre-modern Moravian *Seremoj és Románca* discovered in Hungary.

**Listen -- Hungarian traditional: *Seremoj és Románca*
(track 2, 2:01-2:46) © 2014 Navona Records LLC :**

The two Greek items (tracks 3 and 4) evoke a time before the tide of Mediterranean tourism. Al-Zand's *Fantasy* has a patina of elements found in the composer's Eastern heritage.

**Listen -- Karim Al-Zand: *Fantasy on Bulgarian Rhythms*
(track 5, 0:00-0:48) © 2014 Navona Records LLC :**

For echoes of Kalinka (Ivan Larionov, 1860) turn to *Korobushka* (track 6).

In 1955 *Malaguena* (track 7) was popularized with German language lyrics sung by Caterina Valente, and Werner Müller's Orchestra.

Zortziko — *Aurresku*, traditional Basque dances, solemn and elegant, were performed in formal circumstances to honor prominent local figures. Apollo's arrangement of the combined dance



tune, for solo violin, was inspired by a guitarist's version. Amazingly, they involve only an interval of a major seventh, never leaving the G and D strings yet encompassing a multitude of soundscapes, its soulful melody fusing instinctively with a violin's expressive color palette.

**Listen -- Basque traditional: *Zortziko and Aurrescu*
(track 8, 0:00-0:55) © 2014 Navona Records LLC :**

Fandango, a lively Basque couples' dance (track 9), usually in triple metre and traditionally accompanied by guitars and castanets or hand-clapping ('palmas' in Spanish) is here performed as a violin duo.

There are many variations of the *Fandango* and *Arin-arin* (*Jota / Arin-Arin*, track 10), including the *Jota* and *Porrusalda*. The significant difference is that the *Fandango* uses four parts while the *Jota* uses just three, with the third segment being longer, usually for the singing of verses.

Despite these differences, the *Fandango* and *Jota* share much in common.

**Listen -- Basque traditional: *Jota / Arin-Arin*
(track 10, 3:48-4:31) © 2014 Navona Records LLC :**

'*O sole mio* is a globally known Neapolitan song written in 1898. Its lyrics were penned by Giovanni Capurro (1859-1920) and the music composed by Eduardo di Capua (1865-1917). It has been performed and covered by innumerable artists including Pavarotti, Caruso, Gigli, Mario Lanza, Sergio Franchi and Tony Bennett.

Salento — Pizzica (track 12) is a popular Italian folk dance, originally from the Salento peninsula (the southeast heel of Italy) and later spreading throughout all the Puglia (foot) and Calabria (arch).

Hofbrauhaus Polka originated in the middle of nineteenth century Bohemia and celebrates Munich's oldest breweries.

**Listen -- German traditional: *Hofbrauhaus Polka*
(track 13, 1:39-2:19) © 2014 Navona Records LLC :**

Music of Karim Al-Zand has been called 'strong and startlingly lovely' (Boston Globe). His compositions are wide-ranging, from settings of classical Arabic poetry to scores for dance and pieces for young audiences. He explores connections between music and other arts, and draws



inspiration from sources such as nineteenth century graphic art, fables of the world, folksong and jazz. The themes of some Al-Zand pieces speak to his Middle Eastern heritage and he has enjoyed success in the US, Canada and abroad. Al-Zand is a founding member of Musiqā, Houston's contemporary music group, which presents classic repertoire of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Artistic Director and violinist Matthew Detrick studied at Rice University. He is concertmaster of the Symphony of Southeast Texas, in Beaumont, and performs regularly with Houston Grand Opera, Ars Lyrica, Mercury and other Houston-based ensembles. He co-founded the ACP in 2008.

Beyond Houston, Mr Detrick has appeared with the Charleston Symphony Orchestra, the Jacksonville Symphony, the New World Symphony Orchestra in Miami, Florida, and the Symphony of Southeast Texas. In 2008 and 2009, he joined the Sarasota Opera Orchestra for their annual winter season in Sarasota, FL. An avid traveler, in 2006/07 he enjoyed the opportunity to perform with the AIMS (American Institute of Musical Studies) Festival Orchestra in Graz, Austria and he collaborated with artists of the Zephyr Ensemble in a 2009 concert tour throughout Japan and Panama. In past summers, Detrick has participated in the Aspen Music Festival, Colorado, and the Spoleto Festival USA. He also serves the Houston Youth Symphony as a violin coach and a private instructor for the organization's outreach program.

Mexican violinist Anabel Ramirez began studying the violin age six with Russian violinist Gari Petrenko. By 1991, she had twice won the 'National Violin Competition' in Mexico. In 1992 Anabel began attending the Ollin Yoliztly School for the Arts in Mexico City, studying with Natalya Gbosdetskaya. After winning the 'Carlos Chavez' Concerto Competition (1996) she went to the US to study at the University of Houston. Ms Ramirez has participated in several music festivals including the Aspen Music Festival with Dorothy Delay, the Mozarteum of Salzburg with Carlo Chiarappa, and the Musicorda Festival with James Buswell. She has also participated in masterclasses by Vladimir Spivakov, Eric Friedman, Almita Vamos, Charles Castleman, Robert Mann, Sylvia Rosenberg, and Camilla Wicks, among others.

Ramirez was winner of the 1998 American String Teachers Association Regional Competition as well as the Musicorda Concerto Competition. She was awarded the 2002 Mozart Medal for musical achievements and has also appeared as soloist with major orchestras in her home country, including the National Symphony and Minería Symphony, and locally, with the Galveston, Clear Lake, Woodlands and San Antonio Symphonies. She has been a core member of the Houston Grand Opera and Houston Ballet Orchestras since 2008.

ACP violist Whitney Bullock is active as both a performer and teaching artist. She is currently in her third season as Principal Viola of the Symphony of Southeast Texas and the staff viola instructor for the Michael P Hammond Preparatory Department at Rice University's Shepherd



School of Music.

Ms Bullock has appeared for seven consecutive summers at the Aspen Music Festival, where she has served as Assistant Principal Viola of both the Aspen Chamber Symphony and Aspen Festival Orchestra. Her highlights in Aspen include performing in the US premiere of Arvo Pärt's chamber work *L'Abbé Agathon* and appearing with the Sybarite5 for CBS. She worked with violinists Gil Shaham, Adele Anthony and conductor Nicholas McGegan. Bullock has performed with the New World Symphony, the Spoleto Festival USA Orchestra, and the Houston Ballet Orchestra. In addition to teaching at Rice's Preparatory Department, she coaches the viola section of the Houston Youth Symphony and teaches lessons through that organization's Melody Program, which provides free private instruction for economically disadvantaged musicians. She received her undergraduate degree in viola performance and women's studies at Vanderbilt University and her graduate degree at Rice University. She also has a private viola studio in her home and freelances in the Houston area.

ACP's cellist, Mark Dudzik, has performed throughout the United States and Japan, and is a versatile cellist who is as passionate about authentic early music as he is about the dynamic world of new music and great masterpieces of the western tradition. In Houston he has appeared in a wide variety of settings including with the Houston Grand Opera, The Houston Ballet, Mercury, the Orchestra Redefined, The River Oaks Chamber Orchestra, The Houston Chamber Choir, Theater Under the Stars, the KUHf Ensemble and the Foundation for Modern Music. He maintains a diverse private studio and is a teacher for the Houston Youth Symphony Melody Program. Dudzik began playing the cello at the age of nine under the guidance of Minnesota Orchestra cellist Sachiya Isomura and continued his studies at Southern Methodist University, where he was a student of Ko Iwasaki, before moving to Houston to study with Norman Fischer where he earned a Master of Music from Rice University.

Four string players: Euro folk champions! Bravo!

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