

The Vinyl Anachronist

Thursday, February 14, 2019

June Bisantz & Alex Nakhimovsky's Love's Tango

Marc Phillips



Additional music reviews

from the Managing Editor of The Occasional magazine.

[View my complete profile](#)



There's a happy little place in the music section of my brain where I really respond to tropical jazz, that smooth yet enormous sound that floats along with the tradewinds, that stuff made so popular in the '50s and '60s by people like Martin Denny and Henry Mancini. The perfect trigger for me, for this kind of connection, is Mancini's "Lujon," which I'd never heard until I watched the 2000 film *Sexy Beast* with the amazing Ben Kingsley. Or perhaps Annette Bening's character in *American Beauty* playing an old recording of "Bali Hai" during dinner also evokes that same sense of adventure, coupled with a supreme sense of being at rest while enjoying the spoils.

Singer June Bisantz and pianist Alex Nakhimovsky have toured together since 2005. They also love a lot of the same things—classical music, for instance, and Latin rhythms. The first few minutes of this new album is directed right at the heart of the world of tango, which shouldn't be a surprise, but you'll start to hear those same shifts in the music, toward Mancini and Denny, and that's when those emotional connections are made and it all sounds so lush and beautiful. Actually, it sounds Lush and Beautiful, because this is the type of music I think about when I hear those two words. Remember the old Calgon bubble bath commercials? Like that.



It's the classical training this duo shares—they both played violins as "their first instrument"—that really stretches out that gorgeous Tahitian sunset, the one that was filmed in Technicolor. Bisantz's voice is smooth, mellow and beckoning--by that last word I mean that she's calling out to you to pack your bags and come along. Nakhimovsky's piano is stoic and provides that stability for the soloists to shine--Norman Johnson's guitar, winning horn and string sections

and Ed Fast's amazing support on all sorts of percussion. The perspective can shift depending on Bisantz—it moves in close when she's singing, and then it pulls away and spreads out when she steps back to enjoy the solos.

Love's Tango really sails when all decks are on hand, and I promise to stop using nautical terms after that. But that's the essence of this music, the big string sections, the sound of musical notes skipping along the tops of waves, the feeling of that warm wind across your face. That's not a bad thing in the middle of winter. I warned you that that a lot of tango was coming this way, and it was going to be "a thing" in 2019. Now I'm just wondering if it's a seasonal thing, a way to comfort jazz fans and get them through the winter in one piece. I see no problem with that; it's working.