

# SONGLINES

March 2009

## Grooves

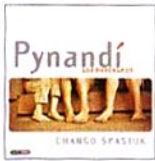
### Chango Spasiuk Pynandí - Los Descalzos

World Village

Full Price (53 mins)

★★★

*Barefoot he may be, but he's impeccably well groomed*

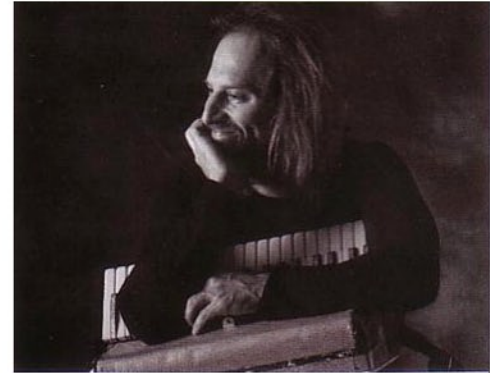


To remind us of his humble roots in Misiones in north-east Argentina, Chango Spasiuk likes to repeat himself. The name of this album is *Pynandí*, the native Guaraní word for barefoot. The album is subtitled in Spanish '*Los Descalzos*' (the barefoot ones) and sub-sub-titled '*Memories from a Barefoot Childhood*'. These linguistic layers tell their own story: accordion virtuoso Spasiuk sees his mission as that of an itinerant ambassador of *chamamé*, the bittersweet folk music of his region. Though he spends much of his time travelling the world and now resides in Buenos Aires, the fount of his inspiration is still the red-earth patios, the *maté* tea plantations, the slow steam trains and the wide brown rivers of the subtropics. *Pynandí* is a reflective album, full of gentle, lilting tunes, lonely solos and melodies that slowly gather force and momentum to form huge aural landscapes – before dwindling again to a more introspective, uncertain mode.

It's all quite gorgeous but none of it is substantially different in mood or message from 2004's *Tarefero de mis Pagos* – Spasiuk's themes are, as ever, the land, the journey, *estancia* (ranch) life, local characters and wildlife. He seems more committed than ever to taking the balletic beat out of *chamamé* to create a sort of classical fusion – rather as Piazzolla did with tango. Once again he breaks up a sequence of musical vignettes with an ambitious longer composition, the 'Suite Nordeste', lasting almost nine minutes. Once again he promises a jig or catharsis or some rowdy ensemble chaos but never quite delivers it. Produced by seasoned studio technician Bob Telson, *Pynandí* is solid but perhaps a touch *too* stylish – let's say it's a little too 'booted'n'suited' an album for a man who likes to give the impression that he's got soil between his toes.

Chris Moss

Itinerant ambassador of *chamamé* – Chango Spasiuk



### CHANGO SPASIUk

Argentinian *chamamé* musician

**What are you listening to at the moment?**

When I'm not on tour I listen to the radio a lot, mostly programmes that play Argentinian folk music, especially *chamamé*. Argentina has many musical regions, each of them very defined, with its poets, music and dances. So, listening to the radio is like travelling through all this diversity.

**What are your all-time favourite albums?**

The great traditional *chamamé* records which I grew up with and learned to play the accordion from:

Mario del Tránsito Cocomarola, Blas Martínez

Riera and Isaco Abitbol. Also among my favourites

are: Nigel Kennedy and Kroke's *East Meets East*;

Carlos Paredes' *Guitarra*

*Portuguesa*; and Oumou Sangaré

– her voice and music sound so

fresh and new to my ears – it's

been a real discovery for me.

**Which living (or dead) musician do you most admire?**

The big three *chamamé* stars, mentioned above.

Also Atahualpa Yupanqui and Astor Piazzolla.

**Who would you most like to work/collaborate with?**

String and chamber music ensembles, so I would love to work with groups like Kronos Quartet or the Balanescu Quartet.

**What's the most memorable gig you've been to or played at?**

In New York in 2008 I saw Brooklyn Rider performing with an Armenian visual artist, Kevork Mourad, who was sketching with ink during the music, the whole process projected on a screen. It was beautiful and original. And on one of my very first tours in Europe, in Rudolstadt in 2002, I listened to Danyel Waro. It was amazing to find a music that has so many common elements with *chamamé*, yet these two music worlds are from places so far from each other.

**What young, new artist should we know about?**

At village *fiestas* in the northern interior of my country you'll run into many talented young artists. They are often hidden and undiscovered, even by audiences in Argentina.

