

ANCIENT FUTURE BAND BIOGRAPHY

Formed in 1978, Ancient Future is the world's first and longest running musical organization dedicated exclusively to the mission of creating world fusion music.



Two of the founding members, Matthew Montfort and Benjy Wertheimer, were childhood friends in Boulder, Colorado, who dreamed of forming a band together. In the summer of 1977, Wertheimer and Montfort came to Northern California to study North Indian classical music at the Ali Akbar College of Music. There they met the members of the Diga Rhythm Band (an offshoot of the Grateful Dead featuring tabla master Zakir Hussain, Mickey Hart, and Jerry Garcia), moved into the house that the group rehearsed in, and formed a new band including Diga Rhythm Band members Tor Dietrichson, Jim Loveless, Ray Spiegel, and Arshad Syed (see his biography). The new band rehearsed at the Grateful Dead studio and performed a number of concerts before splitting up into two groups: a Latin band, and the world fusion music group Ancient Future. Ancient Future can therefore be thought of as having formed as an offshoot of an offshoot of an offshoot of the Grateful Dead.

The original members of Ancient Future studied with the master musicians of many world music traditions, from Balinese gamelan director Madé Gerindem to North Indian sarod master Ali Akbar Khan. They used their knowledge of world music to create something new and uniquely their own that is respected by pundits from the cultures whose traditions are a part of the mix. For example, according to INDIA CURRENTS, Ancient Future "plays with technical brilliance and gypsy-like fire," and their music "demonstrates the continuing beneficial influence of Indian music upon world culture."

Over the years, Ancient Future has expanded its musical vision through collaborations with master musicians from more than two dozen countries, cultures, and musical traditions who are now an integral part of what is today more than just a band. Ancient Future has grown to become a large multinational music ensemble with many smaller ensembles within it, enabling Ancient Future to realize its core mission of creating world fusion music.

Ancient Future has released seven full length studio CDs selling over 150,000 units: *Visions of a Peaceful Planet*, *Natural Rhythms*, *Quiet Fire*, *Dreamchaser*, *World Without Walls*, *Asian Fusion*, and *Planet Passion*. Over one million legal mp3 files from three of these releases on Ancient-Future.Com Records have been distributed commercially. This of course does not count files distributed illegally (Ancient Future's leader, Matthew Montfort, was selected as the proposed Class Representative for Independent Musicians Against Napster due to the large number of Ancient Future files being traded illegally). Ancient Future has also recorded two live CDs and a video (for release on DVD) of a live concert featuring four different versions of the band.

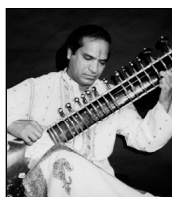
Ancient Future has performed over a thousand shows worldwide, headlining such venues as Carnegie Recital Hall (New York City), Great American Music Hall (San Francisco), Hult Center for the Performing Arts (Eugene), Yoshi's (Oakland), Sangeetha Indian Music Concert Series (St. Louis), and even a night club called Atlantis in Beirut, Lebanon, with a Piranha tank in the middle of the dance floor and a bar that doubles as an aquarium. They have appeared at every type of festival imaginable including the Festival Internacional de la Guitarra (near Barcelona, Spain), Asian/Pacific Festival of Fortune, Northwest Regional Folklife Festival, Oregon Country Fair, Sand Harbor Jazz Festival, California WorldFest, Monterey World One, Sierra Nevada World Music Festival, San Luis Obispo Mozart Festival, and the Summer of Love 30th Anniversary in Golden Gate Park. Dance versions of the band have pumped up dance crowds at techno/DJ events such as the Groove Garden and Harmony Festival's Techno Tribal Dance with their 100% organic loop-free grooves.

BIOGRAPHIES OF THE MUSICIANS

Current biographies of all of the musicians who perform in concert with Ancient Future are available in the biography section of the Ancient-Future.Com web site. A few biographies are presented here:



Matthew Montfort (scalloped fretboard guitar, bandleader): A pioneer of the scalloped fretboard guitar (an instrument combining qualities of the South Indian vina and the steel string guitar), Montfort studied intensively with vina master K.S. Subramanian in order to apply the note-bending techniques to the guitar. It has a fretboard from which part of the wood has been removed between the frets to reduce friction when bending notes. He has studied with the masters of many world music traditions, from sarod master Ali Akbar Khan to gamelan director K.R.T. Wasitodipuro. He has worked with legendary world music figures such as Swapan Chaudhuri and Zakir Hussain. "Matthew Montfort conjures lovely Asian zither-like inflections with a scalloped fretboard guitar." --GUITAR PLAYER



Pandit Habib Khan (North Indian sitar): Born into a family of musicians whose lineage can be traced back to when classical music enjoyed the patronage of the royalty of India, Pandit Habib Khan began his training at the tender age of five under the strict eye of his accomplished father, Ustad Hameed Jaffar Khan. Habib Khan has carved out a distinct style of his own which is a blend of his father's traditional techniques and his own inventions.



Tapan Bhattacharya (tabla): Tapan has a brilliant professional background with more than 15 years of experience. Currently teaching tabla in Spain, he was born in the sacred city of Benares, where he studied under one of the most prestigious tabla masters of his country, his Guru Pandit Kavriaj Ashutosh Bhattacharya. Tapan is known for combining a deep technical knowledge with an irresistible creative vitality.



Salaheddin Takesh (Arabic and Persian percussion): Born in Azerbaijan, Iran, Salaheddin Takesh is a master of Arabic and Persian percussion. In his long career in music, he has worked with the top Arabic musicians and dancers throughout the Middle East, Europe and the USA. He is on the faculty of the Near East Music and Dance Camp in Mendocino, California.



Debopriyo Sarkar (tabla): Born in Jalpuiguri, North Bengal in 1971, Debopriyo Sarkar is a senior disciple of tabla maestro Pandit Anindo Chatterjee. He has been performing in the classical Indian music scene for many years, accompanying many great artists. Since 1997, he has been performing in the international arena, playing many concerts in the U.S.A., Japan, India, the Middle East, Canada and Europe.



Irina Mikhailova (vocals): Born and raised in Kazakhstan, Irina Mikhailova is an international artist emerging from the former Soviet Union. Her musical style reflects a rich tradition of Russian, Middle Eastern and Asian musical influences. Her talent spans many musical genres, from her work on Jewel's 1998 release, to performing with the Eastern European vocal group Kitka, to the world trance group Medicine Drum. Irina's international music career includes extensive touring in Europe and the U.S.A. She has released numerous recordings in the U.S.A. and the former Soviet Union.



Georges Lammam (Arabic violin, vocals): The second of three brothers who are professional musicians, Georges Lammam was born in Beirut, Lebanon. He is well known in the Middle East and the U.S.A. as a solo violinist excelling in improvisation and lyricism. Having performed with the most well known singers of the Middle East, his reputation as an instrumental accompanist with a strong command of *maqamat* (Arabic scales) precedes him. He is on the faculty of the Near East Music and Dance Camp in Mendocino, California.



Liu Qi-Chao (Chinese flutes and reeds): Liu Qi-Chao was born in Shandong China. He is a virtuoso performer on Chinese wind, string, and percussion instruments. Liu studied at the prestigious Shanghai Conservatory. He served as resident composer for the renowned Beijing Oriental Song and Dance Ensemble and wrote several books on Chinese music. Liu has worked with Kitaro, the Kronos Quartet, and has performed for three PBS specials.



Arshad Syed (tabla): An original member of the Diga Rhythm Band, which included tabla master Zakir Hussain and Grateful Dead percussionist Mickey Hart, Arshad Syed also performs with the Zakir Hussain Rhythm Experience, and as an accompanist with top artists such as Ustad Sultan Khan.



Alan Tower (didjeridu, huaca, guitar): A composer and performer of world music for guitar and one-of-a-kind experimental acoustic instruments with a close connection to the earth, Alan Tower also started the nonprofit Octave Alliance, whose mission is music inspiring social change. "Alan Tower brings together innovative technique and real heart to create a new voice for guitar." – Alex de Grassi. "Alan Tower's work makes me do things that very little new music in this music saturated world makes me do any more. It makes me stop what I am doing. And listen. And feel gratitude." -Alan Atkisson, sustainability consultant and author of *Believing Cassandra*



Manose (bansuri flutes): Manose is widely recognized as Nepal's premiere flautist and is the recipient of national awards including instrumentalist of the year. His main training is in classical raga music, but he is also well versed in Nepali folk forms. His music video airs regularly on Nepali TV, he is a member of one of the county's most popular bands, and he performed in Nepal's first jazz festival where he shared the stage with Australian great Don Burrows. He has also performed throughout the USA, France, Switzerland, Germany, Hong Kong, and Malaysia.



Bui Huu Nhut (dan bau): A native of Saigon, Bui Huu Nhut (pronounced "buoy who newt") has lived in the U.S. since 1989 and is a leading performer on the *dan bau*, an instrument of purely Vietnamese origin. Its single string is stretched over a long box, attached to a tuning peg at one end, and to a flexible rod (which holds a resonating gourd) at the other. Its sound is said to "find its way into the secret places of the soul."



Zhao Hui (gu zheng): Born in 1962 in Beijing, China into a family of famous classical Chinese musicians, Zhao Hui began her studies of the *gu zheng* (Chinese zither) at the age of six. She won first place in China's National Classical Instrumentalist Contest, served as top gu zheng soloist for Beijing's China Opera House, and was sent by the Chinese government to perform in Japan, Singapore, West Germany and Paris. She has her own television show on Chinese National Television.



Patti Weiss (violin): Patti Weiss has guested on three tours with the Gipsy Kings. Her studies include classical violin starting at the age of six, jazz at the Berklee College of Music, and Indian classical music in India with renowned violinist Joi Shrivastava. She has performed and composed music for five feature films, including *The Truth About Cats and Dogs*.



Mohammad Nejad (ney, zurna, santur, kanun, oud, setar, dotar, tar, kemanche, violin, daf, dumbek, zarb, accordion): A Persian-born master multi-instrumentalist residing in the San Francisco Bay area, Nejad specializes in traditional Persian classical music, and also effectively uses Persian instruments to add a Persian influence to Western classical, jazz, and flamenco. He performs with the acclaimed Central Asian dance company Ballet Afsaneh, and is the musical director for Anthony Shay's Avaz International Dance Theatre. He has performed throughout Asia, Europe, and the United States.



Benjy Wertheimer (tabla, esraj, guitar, vocals, keyboards): A founding member of Ancient Future, Benjy has studied Indian classical music for over 20 years with Alla Rakha, Zakir Hussain, Ali Akbar Khan and Z. M. Dagar. An award-winning musician, Benjy has toured with bamboo flute master G.S. Sachdev, Krishna Das, and the Zakir Hussain Rhythm Experience.



Mariah Parker (santur, piano): While completing her music degree at UC Santa Cruz, Mariah worked with ethnomusicologist Fred Lieberman on the book projects of Mickey Hart: *Planet Drum* and *Drumming at the Edge of Magic*. She has worked with Shona musician Dumisani Maraire, composer Paulina Oliveros, and tabla master Anuradha Pal.



Doug McKeegan (piano, keyboards): Starting his piano studies at age five, Doug went on to study music at the Oberlin Conservatory, Kent State University, and the University of Otago (New Zealand). He has toured Europe twice and spent considerable time in India studying with notable Indian music teachers such as Pandit Ram Narayan, Ustad Kursheed Khan and Pandit A.G. Bhattacharya. He has produced and performed on CDs with Pakistani vocalist Shafqat Ali Khan.

ANCIENT FUTURE MUSIC DESCRIPTIONS

The music of Ancient Future is an exhilarating fusion of exciting rhythms and exotic sounds featuring virtuoso musicians from around the globe. Their music combines contemporary jazz and rock with the irresistible rhythms of Africa, Bali, India, the Middle East and South America, the rich harmonies of European classical music, and the melodic knowledge of the whole world.

"The key to Ancient Future is its ability to present various styles of music in settings that are accessible but still exotically charming. The net result is an infectious sound that simultaneously entertains and challenges." --Edward Tywoniak, BAM

"Marvelous rhythmic patterns ... truly magnificent tonal balances ... the shifting dynamics, the fabric of the ensemble, the emergence, (then gradual disappearance) of melodic lines and the esprit de corps are MESMERIZING." -- Philip Elwood, SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER

"Many artists have been running toward world music, trying to inject new life into their compositions. For most, it's a superficial exercise; but for Ancient Future, it's at the core of what this band has been doing since the late '70s. And the band traverses this fusion terrain with deft arrangements and beautifully wrought interplay." -- John Diliberto, TOWER PULSE!

"Leader Matthew Montfort's synthesis of styles and sounds isn't superficial -- he plucks the essential musicality of several traditions without discounting them. Beautiful world fusion music." --Roger Carlberg, ELECTRONIC MUSICIAN

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