Payadora Ensemble

Rebekah Wolkstein, violin/vocals

Drew Jurecka, bandoneon/violin/vocals

Joseph Phillips, bass

Mark Camilleri, piano

Payadora is an award-winning ensemble that performs arrangements drawing from Argentinian/Uruguayan traditions (tangos, milongas, waltzes, and folk music such as the Zamba and chacarera), as well as original songs inspired by that tradition.  Comprised of musicians who are each musical powerhouses in their own right, this “superstar group” has combined their profound love of tango with their classical, jazz, and global music backgrounds to create something entirely new. Payadora is officially endorsed by the Argentinian Consulate in Toronto for its adherence to the spirit of tango, and audiences flock to performances that convey joy, virtuosity, humour, and intense passion.

Since 2013, Payadora has presented concerts and sold-out shows at the National Arts Centre, Ottawa Chamberfest, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, Toronto’s Harbourfront Centre, Stratford Summer Music, Toronto Summer Music, Festival of the Sound, Vancouver Island MusicFest, Toronto Jazzfest, the COC’s World Music Series at the Four Seasons Centre, and the World Accordion & Tango Festival in Victoria.  Payadora has also collaborated with the London Symphonia, the Cathedral Bluffs Symphony, the Hannaford Street Silver Band, and the PointeTango Dance Company - exploring the intersection between classical dance and earthy tango.

In the spring of 2023, Payadora’s third and latest CD, the critically acclaimed “Silent Tears: The Last Yiddish Tango”, reached #1 on the World Music Charts in Europe. It received rave reviews, airtime, and press coverage around the globe, including the BBC, CTV, CBC television and radio, the Bangkok Post, NPR, and RTE Irish Public Radio. “…The most memorable release I have ever had the privilege to listen to and review” (WholeNote Magazine). “Silent Tears” is currently #17 on the Transglobal World Music Chart.

They have received creation and recording grants from numerous agencies, including the Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council. Additionally, they were awarded a generous grant from the Canada Council for the Arts to create a multi-arts digital presentation of an Argentine folk tale told through music, dance, illustration, and words.

Across the globe, they have won numerous awards for their work. During Payadora’s November 2023 tour of South America, they won “Best New Piece” at the 2023 Yiddish Music Awards in São Paolo. Their most recent tour of Europe in June of 2024 included an appearance at Germany’s renowned Rudolstadt Festival, where they were winners of the German World Music Award (Weltmusikpreis Ruth Award) for their “Silent Tears” program.