

Gig review: Mr McFall's Chamber, Viva Tango, Jam House (****)



It might have been baltic and monsoon-like outside, but inside Edinburgh's Jam House, Mr McFall's Chamber had created a sultry, convincingly South American atmosphere for their Viva Tango night of music and dance, their capital stop in a short Scottish tour.

It helped the authenticity that the ad hoc classical-based ensemble was joined by a few key interlopers – most of all, the wonderfully supple, ringing voice of regular collaborator Valentina Montoya Martínez, a Chilean singer-songwriter (now based in Scotland) who performed a selection of her sensuous songs in the first half.

'Tango de la espera' brought out real bite from the five-strong string section to accompany Martínez's intricate vocal line, and 'Versos', her account of the Chilean military abducting her father when she was a young girl, had touching passion.



Two other players stood out among the fine ensemble. French tango violinist Cyril Garac gave strong, characterful contributions throughout: he was in the spotlight for Astor Piazzolla's 'Vandarito' with some remarkably expressive playing, swooping and sliding all over the place, and attacking his lower strings with a rich, intense vibrato.

And young French bandoneón player Lysandre Donoso, although

somewhat hidden among the rich ensemble texture, delivered nimble solo work as well as cutting jabs and interjections that reinforced the group's rhythmic bite.

The few numbers by Argentinian tango king Piazzolla stood out somewhat among Martínez's songs, but all were conveyed with impeccable class and style. And in the second half, a dance set of classic tangos, waltzes and milongas from the 1920s to the 1950s gave Edinburgh's finest the chance to show off their footwork – with impressive results. The pre-concert dance class that was on offer had probably helped – and there were more opportunities for movement in the milonga DJ set that followed.

[Mr McFall's Chamber's Viva Tango concert tour](#) continues in [Glasgow](#) (Fri 8 Nov) and [Stirling](#) (Sat 9 Nov), with pre-concert dance classes and late-night DJ sets also on offer.