

KORA KARUNA



Kultural Konvergence...

Kreative Kolaboration...

Kathartic Kommunikation...

Konscientious Konnection...



The sound of Kora Karuna seeks to construct a new global folklore, a truly universal music which expresses the unity within diversity. Combining the ancestral with the contemporary and utilizing instruments and rhythms from all over the planet, each composition contains a unique fusion of ideas, textures, impressions, and emotions. Kora Karuna reinterprets the kora outside of its classical West African musical context, reimagining its sonic possibilities, but remains true to the roots of the Jeliya tradition, utilizing music, storytelling, and poetry to express messages of peace. More than a simple concert, a presentation of Kora Karuna is a ritual, and an invitation to learn, share, reflect, sing, dance and celebrate in an interactive and innovative experience.

"One of the hardest feelings to achieve in music is the feeling of weightlessness... That's what makes Kora Karuna such a joy to listen to: it makes you feel like you are floating in the air. There is something about the kora that gives flight to every note it makes, and that wed to a folk songwriting sensibility gives those notes a forward drive, like a bicycle held up by balloons. The melodies and the percussion all work together in concert to keep the listener aloft." --Nick Jainia, X-RAY FM; Portland, Oregon.





The story of Kora Karuna begins in Asheville, NC in 2007 with its director Gabriel Bass being introduced to and subsequently falling in love with and committing to the Kora (a West African harp), and embarking on a 5 year honeymoon adventure with it as a wandering troubadour throughout Central and South America. Relying on live music as a means to finance the travel and transcend communication barriers while he slowly learned Spanish, he began to immerse himself in the kora, learning how to interpret songs from his blues/jazz/rock background and learning new folklores everywhere he visited, always sharing and collaborating with other travelling and local musicians. The journey would go deeper as he taught himself how to fabricate the instrument and began composing his own songs upon it which largely reflected upon this experience of navigating different landscapes and cultures. In 2010, he settled into an anarchistic and bohemian existence in Paraguay where he helped found the multi-disciplinary artistic collective SomosEres, which achieved significant circulation within the country, earning television appearances and participation in important musical festivals and other events, including a tour in Brazil.

In 2013, Gabriel moved to Colombia and began the task of organizing and solidifying the project, renaming it Kora Karuna after the Buddhist concept of Karuna—loosely translated as ‘compassion.’ While the development of the group has been flexible and adapted to many different scenarios and environments over the years (including an ever changing line-up of musicians and experimentation with multiple genres from free jazz to meditation music, orchestral arrangements, and danceable electronic-organic incarnations), the forward progress has been constant with a growing base of fans and followers.

In addition to concerts, recordings, videos, and collaborations with other artists and musicians, Kora Karuna has also recently been concentrating its energies in didactic performances for children and workshops for building koras and other instruments. For more information on the continuing story of Kora Karuna, please visit us on youtube, facebook, bandcamp, patreon, or visit our webpage: Korakaruna.com.

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