

REVIEWS

Tarab John Field Room

RAY COMISKEY

Tarab, organised by Francesco Turrisi, the talented Italian pianist and accordionist, provided some of the most enchanting music I've heard yet this year. Assembled purely for this concert, thanks to the combined efforts of the Italian Cultural Institute, the Alliance Française and the Goethe Institute, with the support of the IMC, were Turrisi, Gabrielle Mirabassi (clarinet), Roman Bunka (oud), Ronan Guilfoyle (bass) and Bijan Chemirani (percussion).

The repertoire had a Mediterranean flavour. Italian traditional tunes and popular melody were mixed with classical Arab music and pieces from the Lebanon and Turkey, with even a mournful Jewish klezmer thrown in.

The strengths of music like this, with its odd metres and relatively simple, even basic,

harmonies, lie in its qualities of line and rhythm. Where ensemble themes were sketched, this was done in unison; colour came from the tonal qualities of the instruments themselves, while soloists frequently played over a simple repeated figure, rather than changes in the more usual jazz sense, emphasising the demands placed on the imagination of the players by the foregrounding of line and rhythm. With musicians of this calibre, that was no problem.

The opening *Sebouni ya mas*, a plaintive, slow, classical Arab air, with a beautiful oud solo and some brilliant work, albeit more from the jazz end of the spectrum, from clarinet and piano, also underlined the degree of ensemble unity and balance achieved; remarkable, considering how little rehearsal was possible.

The temptation to gild the lily was also resisted. Melodies already lovely in themselves, like the haunting *Attaccati li tricci*, arranged by Turrisi, *Maor Tzur*, a klezmer tune arranged by Nick Roth, and the encore, *Tu Bella*, were treated with respect.

In between, there were moments to recall with enormous pleasure. The accordion and frame drum brought different colours to the lively *Turkish Min Maqam Kurd*, with an irresistibly swinging closing ensemble; Mirabassi's unaccompanied solo in the transition between *Maor Tzur* and Renato Carone's *Caravan Patrol* was an astonishing

piece of passionate virtuosity and sustained invention, as was his utterly engaged solo on a Turkish dance, *Bucher's Air*.

But overall it was an ensemble triumph in which the exotic was embraced for its musical possibilities, not for lack of imagination; quite the reverse, in fact.

Barock RIAM, Dublin

MICHAEL DERVAN

The core idea is excellent. The early music vocal ensemble, eX is bringing in international experts for a series of Arts Council-funded workshops, public master classes and concerts.

eX prefers staging an event to simply giving a concert. Their programme of German baroque cantatas under Konrad Junghänel at the Royal Irish Academy of Music on Monday ("settings, David McDermott," "staging, Eric Fraad") involved a pink-haired girl, dressed like a child of the 1960s, playing pre-performance bossy-boots with the singers. She had earlier done slow-motion distribution of oversize concert programmes, which, without texts or translations, could usefully have been accommodated on a quarter the