

Like all the evening concerts, the closing one took place in the fine acoustic of St Canice's Cathedral. It brought together musicians from three of the four countries represented during the week - Ireland, Britain and the US - to play Schubert's Piano Trio in E flat D929 and Brahms's Sextet in B flat, Op 19. Both pieces were beautifully played; and given the international cast of players, it was hard to imagine a better way to finish than the Brahms. The Carducci Quartet, supplemented by Ani Aznavoorian (cello) and Jennifer Stumm (viola), relished everything this extraordinary piece offers.

It was typical of all the concerts I heard that, while the pleasures of music making were always evident, just as much pleasure was taken in playing with the discipline that such high-quality music deserves.

◆ Aidan Dunne reviews Kilkenny Arts Festival visual art on Thursday

Fay Claassen JJ Smyth's, Dublin

RAY COMISKEY

Having given what was, by all accounts, a well-received concert at Kilkenny Arts Festival, the Dutch jazz singer Fay Claassen arrived in Dublin hoping to repeat that success at the weekend. She did.

She's described as a singer of standards and it's true; with a light but smoky voice and an easy, swinging way of phrasing, that world comes naturally to her and there's nothing forced about her affinity with that material. But it's only part of the truth, because there is more to her than that.

The concert included *Pensativa*, a bossa by the West Coast pianist Clare Fischer, a setting of one of Shakespeare's sonnets, the old Gerry Mulligan Quartet piece *Line For Lyons*, Betty Carter's witty *Please Do Something* and Paquito D'Rivera's tricky *The Lady and the*

Vagabond. All asked questions in different ways.

With the exception of the Shakespearean piece, where the lyrics were delivered with less than clarity, they were answered with considerable aplomb. To impress like that when her voice was clearly not at its best - there was roughness and occasional insecurity at both extremes of her register - is one measure of her quality.

Another indication of her innate and considerable musicality was the way she dealt with the booby-trapped world of scat singing, or improvised wordless vocals. Phrasing like a jazz instrumentalist, she's quite simply one of the best around at this; she was rigorous and inventive, with not a hint of self-indulgence. There was fine support from the accompanying quartet. The German tenor saxophonist Paul Heller, from the great WDR Big Band in Cologne, was a master of the musical *le mot juste* who delivered precisely what was needed in each context; their interaction was one of the more rewarding elements of the night.

Equally adept support came from the fine Italian pianist Francesco Turrisi, bassist Damian Evans and drummer Kevin Brady in a context where there was a balance between the arranged and the improvised that served both well. As for the standards, she saved the best for the second set, which was graced with particularly fine performances of *The Touch Of Your Lips* and *Lover Man*.

Sharon Shannon Band, Mundy Beo Celtic Music Festival, NCH

SIOBHÁN LONG

The tsunami of impeccable, newly minted tunes would have had a dozen lesser musicians dining out for years. Sharon Shannon has hit another creative peak as far as her compositions go, mining the deeper seams of her tradition in cahoots with guitarist Jim Murray to unearth the startlingly playful *Neckbelly*,