

The Classical Events review

Maria Camahort Quintet - Iberian Colours

The concert took place at the Omnibus at Clapham Common on the 31st January 2016. The room was laid out in a rectangular shape and had enough space for about fifty people to experience an intimate concert of chamber music. The ambience was closer to a large living room despite the presence of a discreet cafeteria at the far corner.

The audience were two or three metres from the quintet. Maria Camahort, classical guitar, was in the centre and central to the underlying unity of the players. To her left were two singers: one classically trained, Laura Ruhi, and the other a "traditional singer" who also played the violin, Violeta Garcia. To her right was a cellist, Sergio Serra, and a percussionist and Cajón player, Pablo Dominguez. Pablo's seat was a rectangular box which was also the musical instrument. In the second half the quintet were joined by an oboe player, Clara Pérez. There was some delicate amplification of the guitar and singer.

The Spanish song was central to the theme of the concert: Iberian colours. It is refreshing to say that there was never a simple delivery of verse/chorus songs by a quintet with singers, and "one big sound". The rendition overall was one of subtlety, timbral contrast and intimacy. Carefully crafted arrangements, by Mara Camahort, allowed different combinations of instruments to enhance the expressiveness of the songs by the use of light and clear textures. The compositions themselves reflected a synthesis of the Spanish classical repertoire and influences from Spain's traditional and flamenco music. It was wonderful to hear accomplished musicians given the time and space to express themselves in solos and small instrumental groups.

The Cantar del Alma (1951) by Frederick Mompou, originally written for voice and piano, was perhaps typical of the evening. The music started with Maria on solo guitar and then progressed to a solo traditional voice. The cello with guitar accompaniment followed, and then a soprano solo, and finally all instrumentalists. Despite the changes in instrumentation the music flowed forward without losing emotional impetus.

The duet for cello and guitar 'Bosc' by Gasull (1959-) had a more contemporary feel in terms of harmony. Although influenced by Catalonian song this was, in fact, a song without words and full of impassioned playing. There was real interplay between the cello and classical guitar.

Pa mi niño (To my child, 1993) was written by Chano Dominguez. The drummer and guitarist, Pablo, is the son of the composer. He showed a subtle touch which was sympathetic to the line of the music. This was also an arrangement which included new instrumentation from the original giving a different feel.

Throughout the evening the variety of songs (or song-like compositions) with a short discussion from the players maintained the attention and enjoyment of the audience. From the Morenika (sephardic song) to a simple drum or oboe solo the music was ever changing in texture and instrumentation and always distinctive. This was integrated Spanish music; nothing stereotypical, but arrangements and original compositions that exemplified the musical flavour of the Iberian Peninsula.

The [Maria Camahort Quintet](#) released their debut album in June 2015, with Convivium Record International. With only a few months the album has received very positive reviews. The CD is available in digital format in iTunes, Amazon Music, Spotify, and physically distributed by Harmonia Mundi UK.

Concert details: [Maria Camahort Quintet - Iberian Colours](#)



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