

Musical voyage at the Qadhafi Stadium

Dawn November 12, 2006

LAHORE, Nov 11: The World Performing Arts Festival, which opened its doors to the public on Friday, offered to the audience diversity in styles and origins, proving that the art form is closely linked to the ideal of voyage.

The first evening of the festival, which features puppet shows, film projections, theatre and music, started with traditional puppet shows from Russia and Iran. The thrill came with the sunset and the arrival of Rajasthani Kalbeliyas, a music and dance band from Rajasthan, India. Rajasthani Kalbeliyas is composed of six musicians on Karthals, Dholak, Harmonium, Sarangi, Cheney and vocals, and two dancers - all belonging to the Kalbeliya gypsies' band known as snake charmer band. In the old times, they used to entertain the maharaja with their powerful and sensual dance. The public was impressed by the seemingly endless contortion abilities of the two dancers, and their very energetic stage performance. The folk dance is particularly spontaneous and inspires dynamism. As manifested in the long lasting applause the band enjoyed, this feeling was widely shared.

The World Music Night's programme appeared to be as international as its name seems to suggest. It started with the American dance band Grupo America from San Diego and ended up with the Syrian band Ziryab Art Creation staging a visual and auditory show on ancient Syrian civilization. The programme of the music night was quite heterogeneous. Mario Crispi from Italy, who mixes different traditional wind instruments with techno beats he samples, raised numerous astonished reactions from the crowd. The sound he produces varies from traditional Scottish atmosphere to an extremely progressive rhythm-led mood.

According to Yasir, 28, an engineer by profession, who came to the performance with his wife and 8-month old daughter Asma, "this music is really interesting and experimental and explores new ways". Mario Crispi's solo performance gave contrast to the one of Psalteria, a female quartet playing medieval songs from different places of Europe (Spain, Italy, Eastern Europe...).

The evening's emotional peak was given by the performance of Mamdouh Bahri, a Tunisian born French guitarist. He and the two other group members performed a jazzy funky musical journey. Mahmoud left Tunisia in 1983, and came to France "accidentally". "My original plan was to go to Boston, the city where at this time all the Jazz musicians used to meet and develop projects together. But life is full of surprises, and I stopped in France". Being settled doesn't mean a lot for Mamdouh. Mamdouh and his band will play again on Monday. For this occasion, they will try to mix up with local musicians. For Francis, the bassist of the band, the spirit of fusion and mixing styles copes perfectly with jazz. "Jazz is improvised music, and being able to share feelings with improvised music is one of our supreme aims", he explains. Music is finally all about exchange. — Pierre Jolit