

Entertaining night with Christine Tassan et Les Imposteures

There exist some forms of music which just possess an infectious energy, a rhythm and emotion that cannot easily be resisted.

When combined with exemplary musicianship and fun personalities, it leads to an entire theatre full of people tapping their toes, and literally stomping their feet. The music in this case is Gypsy Jazz, and the personalities are Christine Tassan et Les Imposteures (Martine Gaumond, violin; Ivan Garzon, rhythm guitar; and Sylvaine Arnaud, bass).

Right from the start, this group set a high standard and got the audience moving in their seats.

Christine is a virtuoso guitarist (and I don't use that word lightly), matched by Martine on violin, and the two of them did a remarkable job for the entire night, playing tightly matched melodic lines and rhythms, then breaking into creative and challenging improvisations, so essential for the "jazz" part of this music.

The other two members (both incidentally substitutions for the regular players, yet somehow they almost never had music in front of them) did the perfect job of creating a solid foundation for the soloists.

Sylvaine performed a beautiful solo on the Tears/Smile medley, not an easy feat on an upright bass.

The entire lineup of music was put together as combinations of songs, primarily with the idea of two famous composers meeting, Felix Leclerc and Django Reinhardt, with some "friends" joining at times. The arrangements were very well done, blending seamlessly, leaving the listener barely noticing the shift from one song to the next, always with an interesting explanation to help create the story.

While it would have been easy to just put together a list of fun songs and play, having it all start sounding the same, they instead chose to weave in different feels, taking us on a mostly fun, sometimes melancholy journey.

Add in some really nice vocal work and harmony arranging, and there wasn't really a slow moment in the show, something that, as a performer myself, I know is very difficult to achieve.

A unique aspect of this group that needs mentioning is that, as an all-female group (with the exception of Ivan Garzon who tours with them outside of Quebec), they are exceedingly rare in the genre of Gypsy Jazz. In 2014, they played at the Django Reinhardt Festival of Samois-sur-Seine (France), one of the most prestigious gypsy jazz festivals, and were the first women ever to play the event. Good to know there are still ways to "break the rules" in jazz. I also feel the need to mention that the concert sounded excellent, in no small part to John Adams, who has helped make KCCAs shows sound as good as they do. The best musicians in the world can be brought down by incompetent sound people, so thank-you John for doing such a consistently professional job.

Christine Tassan has created something very special with her Imposteures, a sound that tells a story and creates smiles, and for over ten years people have been dancing to her award winning playing.

This is a group I will personally look for in the future and go out of my way to see. Merci.

Neville Bowman is a musician, actor and a composer.