

MONDAY, 10 OCTOBER, 2011



**SPANISH MUSIC CONCERT**  
**Roberto Alvarez, Foo Say Ming & Lim Yan**  
**The Arts House**  
**Saturday (8 October 2011)**

**This review was published in *The Straits Times* on 10 October 2011 with the title "*Hot-blooded Spanish flair*".**

*Mediterranean Music* would have been the more appropriate title for this chamber concert organised by the Embassy of Spain in Singapore. Besides Spanish music, there was also French and Italian in the programme. *Two Interludes* for the trio of flute, violin and piano by Frenchman Jacques Ibert opened the concert, contrasting a slow pastorate with a swift flowing rhythmic dance.

Spaniard Roberto Alvarez's flute and Singaporean Foo Say Ming's violin were well matched, both high-pitched instruments but with uniquely different timbres which made this combination sound very congenial. Lim Yan's piano accompaniment provided the main rhythmic impetus and variegated harmonies.

Emile Pessard's *Andalouse* was the second French work, but it was Spanish flavoured by way of rhythm and pacing. These however made a lie of the dictum that "the best Spanish music was written by the French". Real and truly authentic Spanish music is however more earthy, hot-blooded and less "polite".

Then came the Italian segment, devoted entirely to Nino Rota. His *Piano Trio* for this combo had little to do with his more celebrated film music. Instead, it juxtaposed very fast Stravinsky-influenced outer moments with a fugal slow movement where Alvarez's sinuous solo provided the main theme. Instead of sounding academic, the trio rose to unexpected heights of passion.

That was the subject of Rocco Abate's *Rotafantasy*, a medley of favourite melodies from Rota's movie scores. Moments of *La Dolce Vita* and *Amacord* were relived before closing with the familiar strains of *Il Padrino*, better known to English speakers as *The Godfather*.

The Spanish highlights were arranged by Alvarez, beginning with the insistent beat of Manuel de Falla's *Ritual Fire Dance*. Better known in its solo piano guise, Lim's piano accounted for the dizzying trills and driving left hand part, while Alvarez and Foo took turns on the swaggering melody. *The Miller's Dance* from Falla's ballet *Three Cornered Hat* was one that gained speed and volume by the second.

The final work Jeronimo Jimenez's *Intermezzo* from the zarzuela *The Marriage Of Luis Alonso* strung together many popular Spanish dance melodies, reaching a climax with the lusty *Jota Aragonesa*. The diplomatic corps within The Chamber accorded the trio a standing ovation, and were rewarded with an encore. At least that was Spanish too.