

Eastern Iowa Life

REVIEW: Magical evening launches Landfall Festival at CSPA

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Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino brought its virtuoso spins on Italian folk songs to the Landfall Festival of World Music on Sept. 21, 2011, at CSPA in Cedar Rapids. (Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino photo)

By Diana Nollen/ SourceMedia Group

CEDAR RAPIDS — Two world-class acts put plenty of kick into Wednesday night's kickoff for Legion Arts' fourth annual Landfall Festival of World Music. (9/21/2011)

The renovated CSPA Hall resounded with French, Italian and Greek dialects, spinning the globe from the Louisiana bayou to the heel of Italy. About 100 audience members moved in and out of three hours that began with a Cajun house party and ended with an Italian jam session, with everyone on their feet, dancing and clapping to the infectious beat.

Several more standing ovations awaited as Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino brought a hip spin to traditional Old World sounds. The six musicians and one sultry dancer who hail from Italy's boot-heel peninsula made CSPA their only Iowa stop on their first U.S. tour.

Their layers of sound and exotic array of instruments brought whistles, shouts and applause during and after each spirited song. Band leader, violinist and vocalist Mauro Durante charmed the audience with his musical anecdotes, again helping an English-speaking audience understand what they were hearing from the Italian and Greek dialects being sung.

Actually, all the evening's musicians spoke the universal language of virtuosity. Jaw-dropping talent blazed from each performer on an array of instruments, ranging from castanets and tambourines to exotic flutes, pipes, guitars, accordion, harmonica and fiddle.

I've never heard tambourines that sounded like drums before, but these did. Several band members played them, in a style akin to bodhrans, using lightning hand moves to create the percussive sound with tambourine shimmer.

Every song was a musical highlight, but my favorite was the tarantella. Based on the notion that the only way to expel a spider bite poison was to dance it out, this folk song spun the players and the audience into a dervish.

My notebook is punctuated with "joyous," "spirited," "lightning speed," "embellishments." Roll those all into one sentence, and it's easy to see why the audience was so eager to linger and dance with a spontaneous burst of tambourines, pipes and dance in front of the stage, after the concert. No one could let go of the evening's magic.