

MELODIOUSLY RICH IN SOUND

by Alice Mascarenhas

It was for me a night on which everything fell into place. The guitar and cello are two instruments I always enjoy listening to – and the cello especially I find an amazingly haunting and captivating instrument. The Jones Maruri Duo are well known and I was looking forward to the musical programme. The setting in St Andrew's Church of Scotland was excellent and the acoustics carried even the lowest notes, even the accompaniment of the birds outside as the sun set, and the occasional humming of the car engines on the move, did not intrude on what was a night of quality and entertainment. A pity though there were not more people in the audience although I did notice some guitar enthusiasts had been drawn in.

Both British cellist Michael Kevin Jones and Spanish guitarist Agustín Maruri are accomplished musicians, and they proved it on the night. They were already well established soloists when they experimented in the field of chamber music in the early 90s – and it worked! Today they are one of only a handful of cello guitar ensembles in the world with an active concert and recording career. So we were privileged to see them back this season on the Rock and with some new imaginative works.

The concert at St Andrew's was their world premier tour of "Evocaciones de España" a piece written by English composer Paul Coles especially for them. Agustín Maruri describes this as a modern piece – and indeed it is! Its rhythmic opening bars reminded me for some reason of the Habanera from Carmen, setting the pace as the piece weaved its way through its Spanish themes, some movements more distinctively recognisable with subtle echoes of Spain than others – I especially enjoyed Café Solo (Tango), and La Chica en el Naranjal (Rondeña), but its Spanish phrases left me wanting for more of a Latin, Mediterranean feel.

But for me the night was marked by the hauntingly inspiring original work "Don Quijote y Dulcinea". I found myself asking "why have I not heard this before?" It was magnificent, evoking all the emotions in an often sensitive yet tormented relationship – the

instruments just oozed with sentiment and passion.

The night had begun with "La Sal de España" - traditional songs which allowed the cello to swing into a gypsyesque vitality. "Suite Española" by Joaquín Nin, and "Suite Española" by De Falla simply ended a most enjoyable evening.

And as an encore, well, it was special! I had never heard the

Ave Maria played on the cello, with such an original arrangement with guitar – sensitively played by both musicians. Unforgettable, melodiously rich in sound. That I believe was what the evening was, "melodiously rich in sound", with a high quality of musicianship not often heard locally, combining both the cello and guitar, creating a unique sound.

