

This Is How We Fly

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Whelan's, Dublin

BORN OF a shared spirit of adventure, This Is How We Fly is a quartet soaked in tradition, but intent, just as TS Eliot sagely suggested, not to drag it around with them like a dead load, but to harvest fresh bounties from the seeds of their inheritance. In between almost hair-shirt renditions of tunes, Caoimhín Ó Raghallaigh found a synchronicity between his playing and the dance steps of Michigan's Nic Gareiss that was breathtaking. Ó Raghallaigh confided to the punters that Gareiss had been busily practising the dark art of levitating, but truth was, we had already figured that out for ourselves, such was the weightless quality of Gareiss's steps. And a further truth didn't elude the rapt audience either: for every step he took, and every note Ó Raghallaigh played, equal space was given to the notes and steps that remained in the ether, sublimely left to the punters' imagination.

Swedish percussionist Petter Berndalen brought a mischievousness to his percussive antics, relishing the challenge and the satisfaction of finding himself keeping company with a such a buoyant dancer, and jousting in between, with Nils Okland tunes. Bass clarinetist and alto saxophonist Seán Óg built fluid, sinuous patterns beneath the percussion and fiddle, all the better to unite the trio of musicians beneath the G forces of Gareiss's dance steps. Throughout the evening it was as if the four were deconstructing their repertoire, only to reconstitute it in shapes entirely of their own making. Their shared *joie de vivre* was palpable, along with the pinprick non-verbal communications that passed between them, literally, in the blink of an eye.

The human epitome of the unbearable lightness of being, Nic Gareiss was the undisputed star of the evening, with his sole prop being a handful of dust which he used for additional percussive impact as he shimmied his way across floorboards, sprinkling it as if it were stardust.

Ó Raghallaigh's own tunes were a celebration of circular motion. *Ellipses* and *What What What* delved deep into the heart of recurring chord sequences, as if they were the illicit offspring of Martin Hayes, whose love for unpicking well-worn traditional tunes to unveil their simple essence is almost a trademark by now.

Berndalen was even moved to join Gareiss in (semi) flight as the night drew in. Traditional music shot through with the adrenaline of contemporary influences: a lethal but irresistible cocktail.