



Port Isaac's Fisherman's Friends performing at the Minack Theatre, in Cornwall, May 20



Polish supergroup, Zakopower

One moment Henriksen's amazing trumpet sound took us far into space, the next moment the Hardanger fiddles brought us to the Norwegian countryside, and if you closed your eyes when Henryson played his cello, at times you would think he played an instrument from the Middle East. It all worked extremely well together. It's also worth mentioning the video and light design by Tord Knudsen that gave the music an additional dimension. I hope the music will be released on CD – the whole world should have the opportunity to hear this music. Music lovers outside Norway deserve it.

Bernt Bakken

BALLAKÉ SISSOKO AND VINCENT SEGAL

Norfolk & Norwich Festival, St Peter Mancroft Church, Norwich, May 16

Bring together a highly regarded Malian *kora* player and an innovative French cellist unafraid of improvisation and you are blessed with a synergy that lies well beyond the realms of mere 'fusion.'

The musical interplay between the pair seemed almost intuitive: Sissoko plucking a rippling rhythm while Segal soared, then a

seamless turnaround as the *kora* took the melodic role and the cello underpinned like a pulsing double bass. This was highly sophisticated music; complex, yet organic and deeply moving.

While Sissoko's *kora* playing showed a delicate lightness, Segal's cello had a harder tone that evoked Sahelian dust. The virtuosity of both was staggering: Sissoko welded to his instrument as if it were a third limb, Segal coaxing sounds from his cello that emulated African instruments like the *ngoni* and *ritti*.

Two men; umpteen ancient strings; one ancient chamber: Norwich's most beautiful church was an inspired choice of setting for this memorable event. The description, 'chamber music', is certainly apt, although the beating heart of this music lies far to the south on the dusty banks of the Niger River.

Laurence Mitchell

ZAKOPOWER

HMV Forum, London, May 13

Following on from their successful London debut in 2010 at Nigel Kennedy's Best of Polish Weekend at the Southbank Centre, Zakopower returned to hammer out a short but concise six-date tour. Currently one of

the biggest bands on the Polish music scene, they were formed in 2005 by Sebastian Karpziel-Bułecka, who was born in the mountain region of Zakopane – hence the group's name. Their very own brand of highland exuberance, folk twists, rock aesthetics and modern-dance elements combine to fully energise the audience.

This ebullient nine-piece resemble a cartoon crossbreed of the Pogues and early Dexys after one shindig too many in the Podhale Mountains. Zakopower blend traditional instruments including bagpipes, viola and upright bass with a more orthodox rock approach. The result is certainly wild but never ramshackle.

They sing in Polish but speak in English between songs, albeit heavily accented which can be difficult to understand but does add to their charm. Their songs, I am told, are of the drinking variety, philosophies about dark nights of the soul, and they denounce the troubles born out of modern materialism. Main man Karpziel-Bułecka, with his movie star looks and fine multi-instrumentalism (bagpipes, violin and vocals) is engaging throughout, and the band's obvious cohesion seems adept at capturing any audience thrown at them.

Andrew P Childs **NI**

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