

Musical Reviews for Blogfoolk by Daniele Cestellini – Professor of Ethnomusicology
<http://www.blogfoolk.com/2014/03/migala-world-n-folk-music-paolo-roberto.html>

Migala's musical project features a work of "fusion", the stylistic choices of the band aim to "represent" - with a world music attitude - some key elements of the oral traditions' musical heritage. The group - based in Rome - has just released their first self-titled album. The front cover shows the phrase "World 'n' Folk", that is a statement of style and purpose, and the marker of a music that is and traditional and "contemporary". "Traditional" in the broadest sense of the term, because the ten tracks that make up the disc (to which are added two bonus tracks, interesting and for the style and for the performance: "Carmen de focu" and "Antidotum tarantulae - Tarantella 1600") have a very broad musical spectrum: pizzica (Salento, South-Eastern Puglia); tammurriata (Campania); some atmospheres related to a vague acoustic jazz sound; references to the narrative structures of traditional ballads; expanded Afro-Mediterranean and Balkan rhythms (world); quotations of classical music and Irish trad. All that is characterized by an original writing style, defined by the confluence of the various members of the project and by the many instruments played. The section of chordophones: guitars, oud, bouzouki, baglama saz, stands out in this CD.

On the basis of what has been said about the two items above ("fusion" and "representation"), the approach of these musicians (David Roberto, Emanuele Quagliari, Emanuele Lituri, Mario Peperoni, Pasqualino Ubaldini) can be related to two categories used by anthropologists, that probably take some additional nuances when applied to music. In this context, the "fusion" is linked to the process of "interpretation" which - in the context of traditional music - it refers to the interpretations that anthropologists give or have given - in the past - to the production of expressive oral tradition and their derivations commercial and internationalist. In fact, as can be read in the booklet of the album, in the note of the song "Antidotum tarantulae":

"Antidotum was transcribed by Athanasius Kircher, an outstanding 16th Century scholar (one of the earliest to get involved in the study of 'tarantismo'); and was told to be one of the melodies chosen for the therapy of the bite of the tarantula."

However, the concept of "representation" is formed by the confluence of two stages, which are - at the same time - also two actions: "contrast" and "de-contextualization". The latter seems particularly interesting, because it defines not only the distance between the "producers" (the musicians in this case) from the "matrix" that inspires them, but also because it measures the degree of consistency with the information coming from the "matrix" (pizziche performed with electric bass, guitar and bouzouki, as listened in the song "Pizzingara").

Speaking in more general terms, we can say that behind the interpretative connections that musicians have with the oral musical heritages, a new - and sometimes original - repertoire takes shape; this new creation remains almost indefinable to the extent that it is lost in the magma of terminology, music reviews and "critical reports". This repertoire certainly can become quite common among the musicians, especially in the approach and methodology through which different musical influences are selected and re-assembled. I believe that is turning into a useful key to understand the dynamics affecting many musical productions inspired by traditional music. Basically, in the last fifty or sixty years, the musicians feel free, despite the many and redundant attempts to explain their aims and objectives, to make public the creative process and to cite their sources by themselves. Besides, what distinguishes the world music discographies - from those of other genres that are more defined and more widespread in (not only) western contemporary societies - is the intrinsic characteristic of indeterminacy: a disk of world music can feature many different musical influences; symbolically, its only sure characteristic is the "mixing" of musical genres in a "melting pot" view. This encounter between various genres of music it is not "normalizable" and it is undetermined; there is the will to represent a language, but using only partially its grammatical and syntactic rules.

I wonder if this is the way to untie the knot around the questions that arise from this kind of music: it is not to define the degree of overlap, but rather to measure the perception that the musicians have of musical heritages they confront with and that they decide to interpret. Migala may represent a good example of reflection in this sense, to the extent that the traditional elements of the Italian regions (such as the music of Salento, Puglia and Campania) are treated as other musical elements (such as jazz manouche or music from Eastern or Northern Europe), and to the extent that the same musicians analyze the pieces that offer, through a system of notes accompanying each track. "Pizzingara" - a song very rhythmic and dynamic - is presented in the booklet through a structured note, which presents the historical references and the comparisons with other types of music (even with classical music). In the booklet, the contemporary dimension of the musical admixture and the creativity of the authors are described with an explanation, which could resemble a "manifesto" of world music:

"Starting with a classic citation (the opening of the De Sarasate's Zigeunerweisen) the first part is steeped in the music of Eastern Europe, especially in the gypsy tradition. The second part is a "pizzica", sung this time not in the dialect of "Salento" - as usual - but in the dialect of "Andria". In the final part there are frequent changes of structure and rhythm: a transition in reggae sound, a bit of folk-prog and "pizzica", to end up again with Balkan music."

Musical Review for MusicalNews by Andrea Belmonte

<http://www.musicalnews.com/articolo.php?codice=27070&sz=4>

Migala is an Italian band playing in the live scene since 2008. The first album is a multi-faceted and pleasant mixture of traditional Italian music and sounds of the world.

Migala is an Italian ensemble that offers a personal interpretation of world music and folk music through the mixture of the traditional folk repertoire of Southern Italy with Balkan, Irish, Afro – Mediterranean and Latin sounds.

In the album "World 'n' Folk Music", there are 12 tracks (an hour and ten minutes of listening). Davide Roberto, Emilio Quagliari, Emanuele Lituri, Mario Peperoni e Pasqualino Ubaldini collect the most significant passages of their musical journey that began in 2008. To complete the album there's a booklet, in Italian and English. I suggest to read it while listening, because it is essential to understand the meaning of the lyrics in Italian dialects and to know the cultural references and literary themes that lie behind the compositional choices.

But let's deal with the songs. Every composition of this album is structured as a journey, with a clear starting point and a path well drawn by the use of instruments and sounds that lead you to the geographical area that our musicians want to describe musically.

"Bicicletta" opens the Cd: an instrumental track with echoes of manouche jazz where a nice sober guitar is followed by an impeccable violin. In the same way a quiet ride can - when a downhill is found - easily become a gallop, the piece - from manouche music - breaks out in a "pizzica pizzica" (a typical tarantella of Salento).

"Carmen de focu" - the second track - has an introduction with the theme of the "Habanera" from Bizet's Carmen. The languid pace of the first bars, led by the violin with the rhythmic section articulating few elements, anticipates the entrance of the voice of Davide Roberto. From here on, the quintet launches itself into a rousing "pizzica pizzica". Here the voice is the real 'selling point': it's poignant, and it's able to emotionally engage even those who - like me - can't easily understand the dialect.

It's the turn of another instrumental piece - "Il Saltimbanco" - in my opinion the most successful part of the album: between tango and Balkan music. It's impossible not to imagine ourselves in front of a street artist or a juggler trying to surprise us with always more difficult tricks. This track could be used like a soundtrack for a film.

"Acqua di Sale" is a song sung in Italian, its lyrics speak about a typical recipe of Southern Italy's gastronomic culture. This piece has a simpler structure than the previous ones. The lyrics - in my opinion - are not particularly bright and are not enhanced by the music and by the melody of the vocal line.

With "Viaggio Primo" we come back into the good path: a relaxed bossa nova, that brings to mind the hot sun of Southern Italy, bursts into a wild pizzica. The voice of Davide Roberto - maybe not enough exploited in the album - convinces for its intensity.

"Rotta a Levante" opens with a beautiful African rhythmic texture, then makes a stop in Campania (Southern Italy) with a "tammurriata" - that still gives us a nice vocal interpretation - and eventually ends with a Balkan music final. This track is complex, it needs to be listened more than once to appreciate the various languages.

Less complex than the previous track, "Lives" is a guitar composition inspired by the sounds of the

70s. Certain atmospheres are reminiscent of prog-rock, and - why not? – of Franco Mussida (guitarist of Italian progressive band PFM). The arrangements are nice and the track is well played, but, in my opinion, it's a bit foreign to the contents of the album.

We have a new change of atmosphere with "Antro della Sibilla Cumana" - track number seven - that has a hallucinatory and hypnotic sound, a litany of violin floating above an interesting texture of guitar and bass. The final part sounds like a tarantella and the atmosphere seems like a celebration. Also in this case they prove to be great musical photographers, capable to evoke clearly the story behind the music; in this case the pilgrimage of the devotees of the Sibyl of Cumae through the narrow passages leading to her cave.

The album continues with "Antidotum Tarantulae - Tarantella in 1600", a successful union between two compositions belonging to the tradition of Southern Italy, the first of which was used in the healing rituals known as "tarantism", and Irish and classical music.

"Pizzingara" is a mix of traditional Balkan folk and the traditional sounds of Puglia (Southern-Eastern Italy). The result is a song very dynamic, with an outstanding violin. A song to dance!

"Passione Lunatica" is a tribute to Pat Metheny: genius of guitar and great alchemist of world music and jazz sounds. This track is a soft and elegant samba and it's a successful homage; nevertheless it's with folk sounds and dance rhythms that the band expresses its best.

"Pietre & Third Stone From The Sun" completes the track-list. Here the Middle-Eastern rhythmic texture merges perfectly with the melodies of the oud and the violin. In the final part a quotation from the song by Jimi Hendrix played by the violin ends successfully the album.

In summary, "World 'n' Folk Music" by Migala is a complex album, that what I've written can only partly describe. At first listen, you are struck by the energy given by traditional musical sounds of Southern Italy and Balkan folk. Further listening the album can astonish for the abundance of less evident details. The five are great performers; they are researchers and spokesmen of the rich musical tradition of Southern Italy, with a commendable opening to the contemporary musical world.

I recommend this album for the lovers of various musical cultures of the world, for the ones who like to appreciate music not only by a quick listening.