

CELTIC CONNECTIONS - Skyedance in Spain
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DONOSTIA, a piece evoking the Basque city of San Sebastian by Asturian bagpiper Jose Manuel Tejedor, heralded the Spanish invasion of Glasgow, courtesy of host fiddler Alasdair Fraser. Not that fiddler strictly defines Fraser's style as his epic Theme for Scotland with its magnificently deep musical vision proved later.

But fiddle he did like a master chef overseeing a musical banquet in which each dish was prepared by a team of illustrious guests, be they accordionists Kepa Junkera and Joxan Goikoetxa, his own piper Eric Rigler, or Oreka TX duo playing the txalaparta, one of the world's more unusual instruments.

Nick-named Charlie Parker, it's constructed from a number of tuned wooden planks which marimba-like are struck with two fat sticks. It added a thrillingly unearthly, almost mischievous undertone to pieces like Stoney Run aided by Mick Linden's funky bass and Peter Maunds sensitive yet powerful darbuka,

Inside a spicy sequence of musical engagements two moments stopped time: Galician piper Susana Seivane's riveting solo and the bereted appearance of Mikel Laboa. Best described as the Basque laureate, this wise poet like an ancient seer came to sing just one song, Txoria Txori, his metaphor for freedom. It crowned a night that celebrated the pleasure and power of musical exchange.