

Caoimhín Ó Raghallaigh, Catherine
McEvoy and Micheál Ó Raghallaigh
The Coach House, Dublin Castle

SIOBHÁN LONG

Flight: that's what this music does. Taking flight, never fighting it. Finding just the air currents to suit their mood and tempo, fiddle, flute and concertina take to the air with the quiet confidence of travellers well versed in the vicissitudes of life's unpredictable undercurrents.

On a tour billed as 'Horsehair, Wind and Reeds', Caoimhín Ó Raghallaigh led this merry trio on a fleet-footed foray through vast meadows, indeed prairies of tunes, his fiddle often leading, sometimes following, and occasionally refraining from joining the melee.

He's an experimentalist whose feet are firmly rooted in a deep love of tradition, and so his utter reinvention of Peadar Ó Riada's

An Draighean was a revelation of both restraint and innovation, eking and stretching the core of the tune to fleetingly reveal its delicate underbelly, as if it were a Turner painting peeping out from under its layered protection into the weak light of January.

Catherine McEvoy's gorgeously rhythmic flute style was the ideal counter to Ó Raghallaigh's fiddle, and Micheál Ó Raghallaigh's concertina brought a magnificently deep and throaty quality to the tunes.

Amid countless nameless tunes that featured slides, reels and a lovely version of *O'Sullivan's March* (borrowed from Breannbán Begley's knapsack), the three ebbed and flowed, shimmied and slid through a repertoire that reeked of an experiment rapidly fermenting into something special.

McEvoy's choice of the slow air, *Sliabh Geal gCua na Féile* was the perfect base from which to bend and embellish notes, her phrasing indelibly rooted in a Sligo style, yet refreshingly free of any hint of predictability.

Micheál Ó Raghallaigh embarked on a lengthy solo that navigated its way through a lovely four-part version of the jig, *Apples In Winter*, as well as *The Humours Of Ballyconnell*, before abruptly coming to a halt due to an unexpected technical difficulty with his concertina.

His playing is ever inventive and lithe, although this solo set stretched just a tune too long and antennae were flagging by the time it ground to a premature stop.

As a snapshot of Music Network's Musicwide strand of work, this trio of musicians were the ideal showcase: individually accomplished and collectively

hugely engaged, they seemed to revel in the chance to test and taste of one another's music.

With further nights on tour, there's a suspicion that their set list would continue to evolve as they wend their way across the country.

◆ *Tours until tomorrow*