

<http://www.verbing.com/MongrelMusic/artists/andalus4-99.html>

Illumination *Al-Andalus*

How can these people who live right here in rainy Portland make such sun-drenched music? **Al-Andalus**, another hometown treasure, plays the music of the Spanish Islamic Empire (8th to 15th centuries), of which Andalusia was the heart. **Tarik and Julia Banzi** also compose music inspired by this rich amalgam of Arab, European, Sephardic Jewish, and Gypsy musical traditions.

Illumination also features **Ranjani Krishnan**, an Indian woman with a voice like a bright silk banner; she sings on three heart-stoppingly beautiful tracks: a prayer in Sanskrit, a lament in Tamil, and a love song in Ladino (the language of Sephardic Jews, having the same relationship to Spanish as Yiddish has to German). "A la una yo naci" (track 9) is the perfect example, first offering us that silken voice, then Julia Banzi's lush flamenco guitar, then a gentle, heartfelt violin.

Tarik Banzi plays a wide variety of instruments, enabling him to draw on an assortment of timbres, and his compositions reveal an interesting musical mind. "The Nineteen" (track 10) succeeds wildly in inducing ecstatic trance using 19/4 (a classical Arab rhythm, we're told) and water-based percussion, not something everyone would try. He's clearly well-versed in the the historic traditions of many complex, unusual rhythms; on "Taktokah" (track 6), he combines 9/8 (*taktokah*, music of Andalusian origin still heard in Moroccan pueblos) with antique timbres and modern chord changes, to startling effect.

Illumination ends with a thunderstorm, so I guess it isn't all sunshine. But it sure is rich bliss.

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