

Mehmet Polat Trio

Drom

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New York, NY



By Ernest Barteldes

On the closing concert of their tour in support of Next Spring (Homerecords.be, 2015), the Mehmet Polat Trio (Polat: oud; Sinan Arat: ney; Bao Sissoko : kora) took to the stage of New York City's Drom for a selection of original songs. Polat briefly introduced the trio telling the audience what the music was about and immediately set out into their set, opening with a mellow-sounding number based around a simple chord sequence, with all the members freely improvising around the melody.

Without interruption, they went right into the second number, a syncopated tune mostly based around Sissoko's instrument. The trio kept at this pace, going from

seamlessly from song to song without pausing – the end of each tune prompted the next, but the differences were quite noticeable as the rhythm and melodic groove constantly changed.

The chemistry that Polat, Arat and Sissoko have is very evident – just a glance at each other is enough to communicate where the music might be going, and during improvised moments they just find themselves in great synchronicity, finishing off a solo where one of them left off. During a short break between songs, Polat talked about their instruments' origins and their sonic particularities, and then went on to play two final tunes, beginning with a composition by Sissoko that had a strong West African feel with some traditional Turkish tones in between. The groove seemed to go around a single chord with lots of improvised moments. They closed the set with a tune that was based around the kora and that picked up speed every few bars, which kept audience members wondering when it was actually going to end – a simple melody that stayed in my head for at least a few hours.

The Mehmet Polat Trio rarely performs stateside, but they should be returning in the summer – it would be great to hear them again, since we don't have many opportunities to hear a group that dares to take traditional music to the next level – one that so greatly integrates two cultures in such an amazing manner.