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Worldly whirl

Posted in Music by Marc Geelhoed on September 15th, 2006

The second concert of the Silk Road Project and Night No. 1 of the 1,001 nights—or concerts, at least; the fest lasts but seven nights—that constitute the World Music Festival came together in the Pritzker Pavilion last night. The Chicago Symphony hosted Yat-Kha, Yang Wei and Issa Boulos's Radio Maqam Ensemble in a stew of Eastern and Middle Eastern works. (Listen to Radio Maqam's mp3s [here](#).) The highlight came at the end, when Boulos and Co. came out to play three of Boulos's songs for his Arabic ensemble and orchestra. David Alan Miller, who conducted the evening, said from the stage that Boulos intended for the orchestra and Middle Eastern instruments to be integrated, not to relegate the orchestra to sawing away in the background.

By that yardstick or any other, Boulos succeeded. The first, "Longa to Marcel," was a dashing sprint with the orchestra's strings doubling the stop-and-start melody with Wanees Zarour and Masoud Kamgarpour, on buzuq and santur. "Sama'i Nahawand" lowered the temperature as a lithe and sighing conversation between the ensembles, and the last one, "Manfa," brought both groups together in a stuttering, repeating rhythm in 9/8 (for you musicians out there) that came and went like a summer storm.

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