

In good company with anything at all

THE Rudsambee company of singers certainly lived up to their name - it means 'anything at all' from the Gaelic *rud sam bith* - with a diverse selection of traditional songs from all over the world.

Their act began even before they took to the stage, with the stirring cry of French song-sheet sellers *Voila l'marchand d'chansons*.

Before even seeing the singers, one could sense this was a polished and confident ensemble, rock solid in intonation with a fulsome blend of voices.

Indeed, this uplifting concert was like a breath of fresh air. The group were able to flex their vocal chords around a wide range of traditional styles, from

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Rudsambee Canongate Kirk *****

mysterious ancient Georgian polyphonies to Shaker rhymes and the rich, improvised harmony of South African tribal songs.

What is most impressive about Rudsambee is the group's democratic approach. All the members make a contribution by writing, arranging or introducing the songs.

This is largely due to director Sheena Phillips, who has a relaxed, easy-going manner, semi-conducting from within the group. The result is

pure, unadulterated vocal splendour as the singers revel in the joy of singing.

Phillips is also a gifted writer and arranger, able to turn her hand to setting poems by Shakespeare and Blake to responding to a friend's response about living with epilepsy in the touching *Song for Jay*.

Rudsambee largely sing unaccompanied but they were joined by cellist Jane Rimer for an inspired setting by Phillips of a sixth century Welsh poem.

Rimer also gave a lyrical and fluid performance of the *Allemande* from Bach's G major Suite.

Susan Nickalls