

La Ciapa Rusa at St Donat's  
Arts Centre

# Evening of music to treasure

DUE praise to St Donat's Arts Centre, for this was the place to be when La Ciapa Rusa performed there on Saturday evening, writes IFAN PAYNE.

La Ciapa Rusa are an Italian folk group from Alessandrino, in the Piedmont region, and the group comprise four young men and a woman who among them play recorders, piffero, harmonicas, dulcimer, hurdy-burdy, violin, 'cello and electronic synthesiser.

The group play folk songs and traditional dances, collected by them from the local singers of their region and the way in which La Ciapa Rusa play them is lively, infectious and, above all, intensely musical.

The group, as a whole, have a wonderfully instinctive feeling for eloquent musical phrasing, with the recorder player being particularly notable for his fluid and rhythmic playing.

The group are skilful in their selection of instrumentation for each tune, combining the reediness of the hurdy-gurdy and

piffero with the contrasting tones of the violin, 'cello and synthesiser.

Somehow, even the occasional hint of Vangelis in the sound seemed appropriate. The music ranged from Easter folk-songs to Piedmont mazurkas, waltzes and polkas, which were as far removed from Strauss as the craggy Apline hillsides are from the coffee-houses of Vienna.

A pair of Arabian-influenced songs were particularly moving (reminiscent incidentally, of Jantina Noorman's work with *Musica Reservata* and contrasted well with the high spirits of the majority of the other dances and songs.

Where else — but at St Donat's — sipping a glass of wine and sitting at a candle-lit table on an evening in May, can one hear a hurdy-gurdy and an electronic synthesiser combine so perfectly to play timeless music so eloquently.

The staff at St Donat's are regularly successful in presenting stimulating performers. So an evening there is a guarantee of artistic quality, rather than the electronically amplified performances which so grotesquely distorted the sound of La Ciapa Rusa at the Llantrisant Festival on Monday.