

Truth, and a Kiss

THE X-FILES

Fox, last Sunday night

Chris Carter, creator and executive producer; Frank Spotnitz, Vince Gilligan and John Shiban, executive producers; Michelle MacLaren and Kim Manners, co-executive producers; Paul Rabwin and David Amann, supervising producers; Harry V. Bring, producer; Corey Kaplan, production designer; Bill Roe, director of Photography, Mark Snow, composer. Produced by Ten Thirteen Productions in association with 20th Century Fox Television.

WITH: Gillian Anderson (Agent Dana Scully), David Duchovny (Agent Fox Mulder), Robert Patrick (Agent John Doggett), Annabeth Gish (Agent Monica Reyes), Mitch Pileggi (Assistant Director Skinner) and James Pickens Jr. (Deputy Director Kersh).

on the mouth (a rare exhibition of physical intimacy). During Mulder's trial, as John Doggett (Mr. Patrick) testifies about the supernatural things he's seen, the prosecutor asks, "What does this science fiction have to do with anything?"

Until the end, the series maintained its mesmerizing visual gloominess, cleverly punctuated with suggestive plays of color and light. What does it mean — if anything — that Mulder's orange prison uniform perfectly matches Scully's hair?

It also retained its conspiracy-theory heart that has appealed so greatly to viewers. After Mulder is captured, his military jailors torment him with beatings and doublespeak. "You are a guilty man," screams a soldier. "You entered a government facility in search of nonexistent information."

Above all, Mr. Carter wanted to reconnect the series to Mulder and Scully. In the final confrontation in the New Mexican desert, when Doggett (Mr. Patrick) and Monica Reyes (Ms. Gish) try to save them, Mulder waves the agents away. As he and Scully jump into their own S.U.V. and drive off, the members of second team look sad, as if realizing that they never quite cut it.

As the final episode ends, Scully and Mulder are left together, alone against the world, in a burst of romance mixed with apocalyptic certainty and unconvincing religious inspiration. They hold hands and contemplate a dismal future of conquering aliens. They also talk of a greater power that may save them. Mulder touches the cross Scully wears around her neck, caresses her lips and then utters the series' final words: "Maybe there's hope." At the very least, there's syndication — and those lunchboxes.



Hiroiyuki Ito for The New York Times

From left, Kathe Jarka, Alan R. Kay and David Taylor of the Elastic Band playing at Merkin Concert.

MUSIC REVIEW

Chamber Players Who Leap Among Periods and Styles

By ALLAN KOZINN

The Elastic Band is a group of freelance chamber players who have joined forces for programs that cross freely among periods and styles that are usually regarded as incompatible. For its performance at Merkin Concert Hall last Tuesday afternoon, for example, the band began with a group of works by Gesualdo, the eccentric Renaissance madrigal composer, and made their way to Mahler (both Gustav and Alma) and Kurt Weill. By any historical or stylistic measure that's a vast distance, and it's a difficult voyage to make with any coherence. Not surprisingly, parts of the program worked better than others.

The opening Gesualdo set left a listener with strong doubts about the enterprise. Two madrigals ("Moro, lasso, al mio duolo" and "Deh, come invan sospiro") were played by a modern ensemble made up of flute, violin, clarinet, cello and trombone. Between them, one of Gesualdo's few instrumental works, "Canzon Francese del Principe," was played on the piano. One can make a case for transcriptions on modern instruments and even for ensembles as peculiarly appointed as the one assembled for the madrigals. But central to that case is that the results sound good, and these didn't.

It seemed a little perverse, as well, to offer the "Canzon" as a piano work when there was a harpsichord on hand and a player — Marija Stroke — who seemed reasonably adept at both. Ms. Stroke's Gesualdo was fairly colorless and a little clumsy; she was better accompanying Mary Nessinger, the mezzo-soprano, in a handful of Alma Mahler songs

during the second half of the concert. As a harpsichordist Ms. Stroke accompanied David Taylor, the trombonist, in Frescobaldi's "Canzon per Basso Solo." Again, the timbral combination was peculiar, but Mr. Taylor's playing is so virtuosic and eloquent that one could hardly complain.

The first half of the concert closed with Charles Wuorinen's "Bearbeitung über das Glogauer Liederbuch," a set of arrangements for flute, clarinet, violin and cello of pieces from a late 15th-century song collection. The similarities between the instrumentation here and in the Gesualdo notwithstanding, these arrangements worked beautifully. Often the works were presented straightforwardly, but now and then a hint of Mr. Wuorinen's sense of humor shone through the textures as well.

The Mahlers had their moment in the spotlight immediately after the intermission: Alma's songs had pride of place, getting shapely, emotionally direct readings from Ms. Nessinger; Gustav was represented by a youthful Piano Quartet, composed when he was 16. It is an attractive piece, sweetly melodic in a Brahmsian way, and it was given a warm reading.

A group of songs from Weill's "Threepenny Opera" were offered in amusing arrangements for flute (or piccolo), bass trombone and piano. And the group closed its program with the world premiere of "The Elastic Band Theme Song," a facile pastiche by Bruce Adolphe.

In addition to those already mentioned, the performers included Tara Helen O'Connor, flutist; Alan R. Kay, clarinetist; Kathe Jarka, cellist; Daniel Phillips, violinist, and Maria Lambros, violist.

Turning a Nonclassic Farce on Its Head

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