

Serenata Series Concert



Serenata Series, Concert 1, Sunday August 13 2018, *reviewed by Martin Wesley-Smith*

What a brilliant concert this was! And such a civilized way to spend a Sunday afternoon. This was the way so-called “chamber” music was always meant to be heard: in an intimate setting in a responsive acoustic, with a small group of excellent musicians.

The setting: Robert Constable’s house in Keogh’s Road, Kangaroo Valley. The musicians: Australian group The Streeton Trio (violin, piano & cello). The music: pieces by Haydn, Ravel, Turkish composer Fazil Say, young Australian composer Harry Sdraulig, and American composer Paul Schoenfield.

The diverse program - entertaining throughout - was superbly balanced and beautifully played. Of the 45 “piano trios” that Haydn wrote, his *Trio in G*, composed in London in 1795, was his 39th. It is probably the most popular and most recognizable of them all.

Maurice Ravel is one of my favourite composers, so I was delighted that his 1914 *Piano Trio* was included. As one would expect, it was tonally more adventurous than *Haydn’s Trio*. Ravel apparently worried about achieving a good balance between the three instruments. Judging from the Streetons’ performance, he solved the inherent problems totally successfully.

After interval we were treated to the three contemporary pieces. First up: *Fazil Say’s Space Jump*, composed in 2012. As a composer myself, I’m wary of criticizing my colleagues’ works; suffice to say, so to speak, that *Space Jump* was my least favourite work on the program, probably because I couldn’t hear much connection between Say’s program note and the music itself. I would’ve preferred to have heard the piece without his verbal introduction interfering with my appreciation of the music.

Sdraulig’s *Joybox* revealed a young composer well on his way to establishing himself as a major Australian composer. The hit of the afternoon, however, was Schoenfield’s *Café Music* (1985). Classical music audiences are not meant to applaud before the end of a piece, but the first movement was so attractive that at its end the Kangaroo Valley audience metaphorically leapt to its feet. Schoenfield’s witty exploration of various 20th century styles was compelling.

The Streetons (Emma Jardine, violin, Umberto Clerici, cello, and Benjamin Kopp, piano) were outstanding throughout, individually and collectively.

The next concert in the Serenata Series has been sold out, but there are a few tickets available for Concert 3 (Sunday afternoon, October 14) and Concert 4 (Sunday afternoon, November 11). See www.serenataseries.com.au or call 4465 1012.

Finally, a big thank you to Robert Constable and Jane McKellar for bringing such a glorious concert to Kangaroo Valley.

Martin Wesley-Smith