

SIGNUM saxophone quartet: Australia Tour 2022

Canberra Llewelyn Hall 17/11/2022



Four saxophones, one violin and a standing ovation



Signum Saxophone Quartet . Photo: Anna Tena.

*Music / Signum Saxophone Quartet and Kristian Winther. At Llewelyn Hall, November 17. Reviewed by **DANTE COSTA**.*

IT'S not every day that you see four saxophones and a violin in a concert hall together!

As part of their Musica Viva Australia debut, the Signum Quartet joined forces with local violinist Kristian Winther in a program that displayed the full potential of the saxophone.

From the contrapuntal echoes of Bach to the jazzy works of Gershwin and Corea, the five musicians dazzled the audience.

The sax quartet, consisting of Blaž Kemperle on soprano; Jacopo Taddei (stepping in for Hayrapet Arakelyan), alto; Alan Lužar, tenor and Guerino Bellarosa, baritone, met in Cologne and formed the ensemble in 2006. Since then, they have enjoyed a successful career in Europe, having recently been awarded the title of Best Ensemble at the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival in Germany.

Joining them was acclaimed violinist Kristian Winther, who has enjoyed a successful career as a passionate chamber musician and soloist.

Opening with a tasteful interpretation of Bach's "Italian Concerto", BWV 971, the musicians of the Signum Quartet kicked the concert off with flare and excitement. Each voice was incredibly well balanced as the four saxophonists engaged in a deep conversation of counterpoint. Their physical moment displayed a sophisticated understanding of the piece and how the different voices interacted with one another. Their sound was well rounded, harmonious and cohesive, gave the impression as if they were operating a single instrument. It was sublime.

Joining the quartet on stage, Winther blazed through a thrilling performance Weill's "Concerto for Violin and Wind Orchestra", arranged for the ensemble by accomplished Australian composer, Jessica Wells.

Initially, I was a bit reticent at the combination of instrumentation, however Winther's rich tone coupled with the marvellous sonorities of the quartet complemented each other marvellously. Winther described the piece as "not taking any prisoners with its musical language". They did well to uphold the modernist aesthetic of the music and, despite what appeared to be a minor issue with a string, nothing phased Winther who weaved his way around virtuosic passes with great flair and skill.

Following an interval, the quartet performed a fun and entertaining rendition of Gershwin's "Three Preludes". Although originally composed for piano, the musicians managed to deliver the piece with an authentic playful, jazzy character.

Selected movements from Bernstein's "Symphonic Dances from West Side Story" were then performed with similar playful humorous gestures that saw some heads bobbing and feet tapping in the audience. Concluding with an imaginative interpretation of Chick Corea's "Spain" and encore pieces, the performers were greeted with a rapturous applause and standing ovation.

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