

Compelling, finely crafted darkness

Stories abounded in this concert, and there was not a lot of levity in any of them. Dark moods, impending death, ghosts, restless seas and depression played major roles. This is the stuff of a cleverly chosen programme.

A new work by Gareth Farr had its origins as a celebration but the Tasman Sea got in the way. Elgar wrote his piano quintet in the summer of 1918, depressed by the ugliness of war. *Death and the Maiden* was Schubert's testament to his fear of dying and his inner turmoil. The Goldner Quartet did justice to them all.

Their playing was a combination of finely crafted dynamics and disciplined performances which produced dramatic moods and virtuosic lyricism. Sudden dramatic shifts, sizzling Spanish rhythms and gentle long-limbed melodies appeared effortless; their pleasure in performing apparent.

Death and the Maiden is the staple of a quartet's repertoire, but nonetheless it is a major piece and explores the inexorable, unremitting struggle between life and death. All of this was fully realised in the quartet's polished performance.

Te Tai-O-Rehua. The Tasman Sea was commissioned for the Goldner

REVIEW

The Goldner String Quartet with Piers Lane (piano)

Chamber Music New Zealand
Nelson School of Music, Saturday night

Reviewed by Ruth Allison

Quartet by Chamber Music New Zealand. Farr's piece is organic and evoked the power and depth of the unpredictable ocean.

Seas surged, winds and tides emerged from the opening cluster of sounds, and seabirds rode the waves. Strong rhythmic bursts captured the terrifying nature of the sea, and the quartet gave a strongly textured interpretation.

Piers Lane chose the Steinway grand piano for the Nelson School of Music, and playing the Elgar Piano Quintet in this concert proved what a good choice he made. The rich, orchestral sonority of this large chamber piece poured out into the performance hall and into the hearts of the audience. Lane produced big sounds; at times urgent and at others, pointed and refined.

No wonder this quartet is one of Australia's finest. They are musicians who can tell compelling stories.