

**Trombone Quartet** Concert – August 1, 2021

Tauranga's 2021 chamber music season continued with a group of well known low brass specialists on Sunday. The afternoon featured a quartet of musicians of whom three have connections to the local area. The ensemble consisted of musicians, Joseph Thomas (tenor and alto trombone), Ian O'Malley (tenor trombone), Ian Settle (bass trombone) and visiting from Wanganui, Hamish Jellyman (tenor trombone). The quartet selected a diverse and difficult programme of exciting works which treated the audience to a high quality low brass extravaganza which was appreciated by the large audience gathered at the Tauranga Park Auditorium.

The concert was delivered in two parts with the first half delving into a range of styles from Baroque to Twentieth Century. The quartet began with the well known **Fugue in D Minor** by **J.S. Bach** which displayed the technical abilities of the players as well as providing a fantastic dynamic contrasts, blending of sounds, and articulation. The second work was **Ludwig van Beethoven's Drei Equali** for four trombones, a staple of the modern trombone repertoire. The work found wide dissemination as a result of the great composer writing it for his funeral. With haunting melodic lines, great balance in the chordal work, and Joseph Thomas playing the specialist alto trombone, this was, for me, a delight to hear.

The group moved into their next work, **Trios Chansons**, by **Claude Debussy**, displaying confidence and control over the complex harmonies, lyrical melodic lines, great colour contrasts and confident chromaticism. The balance between parts and communication from the quartet was a delight to see. **Adagio** from **Saint-Saëns's** Third Symphony was a display of stamina and control. With long lush melodic lines which moved between the performers, it was a display of captivating and compelling musicianship.

**Langsamer Satz, Anton Webern**, was the pen-ultimate work for this half. Written before he delved into serialism and the 12 tone row, this work was a great choice for the quartet to display their hymn like playing with a quality of blend not often heard. The quartet displayed a degree of expression one could revel in and really displayed beautiful high melodic contours counterpointed with complex interweaving harmonic lines.

The final work for the first half was **Suita Na 4 Puzony**, written in 1953 by the Polish composer **Kazimierz Serocki** and as the title suggests written for 4 trombones. The work is in seven movements and displayed the many facets of trombone performance

The second half was a contrast of mainly more twentieth century genres. The quartet opened with **Mendelssohn's Die Nachtigall** and was dedicated to Robert Wilson who was Joseph Thomas's Trombone teacher and passed away in early 2018. It was a heartfelt and beautiful tribute to a wonderful musician and friend of many local musicians and concert goers.

The second piece, **Thelonious Monk's** standard '**Round Midnight**' displayed a fantastic opening solo by Ian Settle on bass trombone and was then picked up by the rest of the quartet leading into some great antiphonal passages. The style and interpretation of this idiom was clearly displayed in their consummate performance of the work.

**No More Blues (Chega de Saudade), Antônio Carlos Jobim**, is arguably considered to be the first recorded bossa nova song. The quartet did an outstanding rendition of this work with the melody changing rapidly between performers. The work changed between the usual bossa feel and moved into a swing and then regained the bossa nova to finish off with. The only thing missing in this wonderful rendition was the clave rhythmic feel to back up the performers.

Moving quickly into the next work, **Hoagy Carmichael's Georgia on my Mind**, re-popularized by Ray Charles in 1960, the musicians played a stunning, musical and soulful rendition of this work that left the audience in awe of the control and beautiful resonance of the trombone.

The concert finished with the traditional work of **Scarborough Fair** arranged by **Bill Reichenbach**. The work was a perfect way to end a fantastic concert displaying long lush lines of melody, thick textures and contrasts, precise dynamic control, with the quartet resonating throughout the auditorium. It was a masterful display of precision playing and musicianship.

The audience displayed their enjoyment of the concert with energetic applause and demanded an encore. We were treated to a very special New Zealand premier of a work written just for the occasion, **Hamish Jellyman's** bluesy/funky composition **A Day In The Life Of Her Majesty, My Cat**. This was a superb end to what was a real treat for a discerning Tauranga audience and it was great to see local musicians showing their high class performance.

Many thanks and appreciation to Tauranga Musica for bringing high quality New Zealand talent and music to our stage.

-- John Page, 2 August, 2021