

Myth and Mother Nature combine for Affetto

By Leon Gray

The musical weather inside Tauranga Park Auditorium was both fiery and freezing when early music aficionados, Affetto performed on Sunday afternoon.

As part of Tauranga Musica's 2019 concert series, the renowned ensemble was joined by guest baritone, Will King, to present a rich and varied programme of weather and myth-inspired Renaissance and Baroque music.

Featuring music by Meder, Mundy, Boismortier, Clerembaut and others, the ensemble's presentation was professional, polished, educational and insightful; instrumentalists Rachael Griffiths-Hughes, Polly Sussex and Peter Reid not only playing with panache, but also offering up valuable contextual information and technical demonstration along the way. Their efficacy was complemented by that of Will King, who performed with control, appropriately nuanced emotion and capable execution of French, Latin and Italian.

The well-crafted programme offered multiple opportunities for all performers to demonstrate both delicacy and virtuosity on a range of authentic instruments; all played with an inherent familiarity with historical performance technique and convention – a rare treat for those interested in such.

Highlights of the programme included the sweeping fantasies and fanfares of Reid's Baroque trumpet in Meder's *Jubilate Deo*, later matched and extended with his dynamic cornetto solos in *Drive the Cold Winter Away*.

By contrast, the soulful and plaintive reflections of Sussex's viola de gamba in *Tombeau* offered a fascinating narrative element, illustrating how the Ancient Greeks' imagined a soul's journey through the underworld after death.

Still by further contrast, the celebration of all four seasons in Mundy's, *Faire wether* fantasia was admirably performed with excitement and flair at the harpsichord by Griffiths-Hughes, illustrating both the graceful fall of rain and the thrill of a storm.

King's attention to vocal detail and authenticity was yet another highlight, taking the audience on many contrasting journeys – the joy of the harvest in Boismortier's cantata, *Automne*; drama and melancholy in Clerambault's *Polypheme* and divided loyalties in Handel's military-inspired, *Gia risonar d'intorno al campidoglio io senta*. All performed with ease and commendable ensemble coordination by everyone involved; voices and instruments seamlessly integrating with each other, fully cognoscente of how complex polyphonic music works when it is played with wisdom.

At all points through the afternoon, it was apparent that the audience found itself emotionally invested in all King and the ensemble presented; deftly recreating the drama and magic that inspired the composition of these works in the first place.