What Review of Alleged Dances, 14 March 2015 Government House Ballroom, Perth
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Harmony found in odd coupling

Australian String Quartet
4.5 stars
Government House Ballroom
Review: Neville Cohn

For the purist, the idea of pairing a string quartet with — shock, horror — a vibraphone might seem a sacrilege.

But, courtesy of Matthew Hindson's extraordinary creative skill and imagination, this odd coupling made for frankly fascinating listening as his String Quartet No. 4 unfolded on this world-premiere tour.

Played on a set of superb Guadagnini instruments, from which the players drew streams of striking, grainy-toned sound, we listened, too, to its antithesis: a haze of far-gentler, pinging tones which Claire Edwardes coaxed from the vibraphone. On paper, it might seem a recipe for sonic indigestion. In practice, it worked wonderfully.

Yet another impressive offering from one of Australia's most insightful and original composers, this work surely deserves a place in the international chamber music repertoire.

Earlier, in the last of Beethoven's opus 18 quartets, the players gave the clearest evidence that the ASQ is a musical force to be reckoned with. In turn intensely dramatic and reflective, this was a performance to cherish. Much the same could be said of Schumann's Quartet opus 41 No. 1.

It is not one of the composer's most inspired pieces but it was offered with such understanding of style and mood that, for the duration of the performance, it sounded significantly better than it in fact is. I cannot recall ever listening to an account of the finale that so impressively evoked its robust, jolly measures.

And in a version for quartet and percussion of excerpts from John Adams' Alleged Dances, the players seemed to relish coming to grips with its many intricacies.

This was an evening to remember for all the best reasons.

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