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Daunting power with lyrical grace

Flight

Australian String Quartet with
Lucinda Collins, piano
Festival – Music
Adelaide Town Hall, Wednesday

Under the Festival's umbrella, the ASQ launched its 2010 Subscription Series with a splendid performance.

With violist Sally Boud back on board, the quartet produced playing of sustained and eloquent refinement.

Balance, clarity and insightful attention to expressive detail are becoming their hallmarks; and they do all this while maintaining an impassioned and spontaneous presence that is always engaging.

All these qualities were well to

the fore in their delightful reading of Joseph Haydn's magically benign and enlightening Quartet in C major op.33 no. 3.

Each movement was touched with a particular tone colour – gently luminescent in the 1st and 3rd, darkly pastel in the *Allegretto* 2nd and cheerfully dazzling in the inventively witty finale.

Born a century after Haydn, Johannes Brahms was largely responsible for resurrecting his reputation in the later 19th century and there was certainly no one better placed to recognise the grandeur of his forerunner's genius. Brahms's own Piano Quintet in F minor op.34 is one of the great documents of High Romanticism.

In a collaboration of a very high order, the ASQ was joined by pianist Lucinda Collins, whose ex-

ceptional affinity for Brahms' keyboard writing, found wonderful expression in a performance of daunting power, balance and lyrical grace. Between these two giants, and in the ASQ's always safe hands, a new Oz quartet by Paul Stanhope (b.1969) seemed a little dazzled but emerged unharmed and mostly harmless.

With Sculthorpe and Vine somewhere in its lineage, this music was full of busy, catchy rhythmic accompaniments, fugitive moments of tonality and a so-called "blues-inflected" finale that was yet an-

other example of the very special variety of nerdiness that adheres to modern classical composers when they aspire to be cool.

Raymond Chapman Smith



TOUR DE FORCE: Members of the Australian String Quartet