



At a civic reception for the Australian string quartet are (from left) Ian Halliday (Horsecross chairman), Mrs Sara Hulbert, Greg Howlett (Cox group), Provost John Hulbert, and Australian Quartet members Sally Boud, Anne Horton, Sophie Rowell and Rachel Johnston.

Two gifts from Perth's antipodean namesakes

AS CLASSICAL director James Waters said, the Perth of western Australia gave Perth Concert Hall two superb presents to celebrate its fifth anniversary and Perth 800, writes a music critic.

These were a concert by the Australian String Quartet and the premiere of a new piece, Iain Grandage's *After Silence*, which the all-woman Australian Quartet began with.

This accessible piece began with excitement, using rhythms and melodic gestures which allow the listener to get oriented as the piece progressed.

A slower section followed with bird-like sounds from the first violin—the bush brought indoors.

Then came a sad lyrical section for cello against tremolos and slower still the quiet simplicity of the final chorale.

Mendelssohn's Quartet in E Flat Op.12 opened and had a feeling of release at the start of the allegro, its first theme appearing ever more beautifully played on each re-appearance.

The unusual canzonetta, an inside-out scherzo, had moderate lyrical outer sections, transformed to the lightest and fastest of

Mendelssohn's fairy music at its centre.

The first violinist opened the andante with a beautifully played statement of the theme, before the quartet leapt into the fiery finale, its second theme done with warmth and affection.

This link was, perhaps, to try to discourage intrusive applause. After the interval the quartet used an added dynamism to express the drama of Schubert's quartet *Death and the Maiden*.

Angry in the first theme, the Australian Quartet relaxed with contrasting charm into the second theme.

Their playing of the Coda was masterly—mysterious, then hysterical and finally baleful. After applause, tension was again achieved in the theme and variations slow movement.

The players rightly took Schubert's decoration as intensification. The devil's dance of the scherzo contrasted with the Elysian ease of the trio.

They moved into the vehement tarantella of the presto using expressive, biting articulation. The merited, huge applause at the end brought an encore—the rondo from Haydn's "Fifths" Quartet.

The ASQ at Perth Concert Hall

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