

REVIEW

The Music of Margaret Brandman **Rhapsodies to Rhumbas**

On Saturday evening, the 9th November, the audience at The Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre in Penrith, were treated to a night of stellar performances of the compositions of Australian composer, Margaret Brandman.

Featuring the composer, plus the finest musicians from Australia, Mexico, Venezuela, and Europe, the concert programme consisted entirely of Brandman compositions for various instrumental ensembles and singers, each introduced by Master of Ceremonies - Ross Hutchison.

An informative pre-concert talk on the musical style of the composer was presented by composer and musicologist Samuel Cottell.

Duo Deconet, Australia's premier violin and piano duo specialising in contemporary classical Latin-American works, performed three new works: *Jucaro Rhumba D'Amor*, *The Eastern Spinebill* and *the Sulphur-Crested Cockatoos Herald a Blue Mountains Bushfire*, and the world premiere of *Binna Burra Dreaming*. To finish the first half, pianist Irma Enriquez joined Margaret Brandman for the two-piano work *Spirit Visions*, an expansive composition with many lively sections featuring Latin-American rhythms.

The highlight of the night was Margaret Brandman herself performing several of her works for piano. Of particular note was her performance of her newly-composed solo work, *Autumn Rhapsody*. This work demonstrated Brandman's affinity with jazz and solo piano writing, as well as her skills in performing classical piano. This piece was infused with virtuosic writing, as well as syncopated rhythms which had the audience tapping their feet.

Celebrated dramatic mezzo-soprano, Desiree Regina, contributed her special magic to the night with her performance of several songs from the song cycle *Songs of Love and Desire*. The tender lyrics, written by Regina complemented by Brandman's heartfelt music captivated the audience. Following the concert audience member Benita Rainer wrote to Margaret "I was completely riveted by the compositions....: Desiree's singing, lyrics, and most particularly, your interpretation of them. I went where I love to go ...into a musical trance."

The second half began with a surprising walk through the audience by the Brandmanburg saxophone players led by drummer Simon Ghali, playing Margaret Brandman's specially composed 'Promenade' after which they played her jazzy three-movement Saxophone Quartet.

Audience member Jennifer Comino commented:

I also loved the 'Brandmanburg Jazz Ensemble' (clever twist in the name - likened to Bach's Brandenburg concertos). They were particularly engaging & humorous coming down from the back of the hall - felt like I was in New Orleans!

The lively second half included more works for Duo Deconet, Desiree Regina and duo pieces featuring the woodwind players on flute, soprano sax and clarinet. Then the aptly named Brandmanburg Jazz Ensemble, including bassist Mary Rapp, took to the stage, along with Blue Mountains' singer Yyani Rose, who gave a classy performance of Brandman's song in the jazz genre - *More and More*. The Brandmanburg Jazz Ensemble presented the final item for the concert, the world premiere performance of *Optimum Number*, a jazz-infused piece in an odd time signature, which included sections for improvisation allowing each instrumentalist to shine.

Hearing the saxophonist and the jazz players has ignited a new appreciation of the instrument and style of music...In fact every piece, every singer & every instrumentalist had their own unique brilliance. Thank you again Margaret for a magical evening! Jennifer and Stan Comino

This spectacular concert left audience members dancing, smiling and on a high note for days after. "Your music made me happy and the feeling lasted a full 24 hours!" Benita Rainer

Stay tuned for more exciting music from Brandman her world- class musicians.

You can hear some of the works on Margaret Brandman's works on her website
www.margaretbrandman.com

Artie J. Brown and Linda Jocelyn