

5MBS REVIEWS

VIVALDI & VENICE

Adelaide Baroque Orchestra May 19 2018
Elder Hall

‘ In the Teatro San Angelo, Vivaldi played a free fantasy which astounded me. He put his fingers but a hair’s breadth from the bridge, on all four strings at such speed. His contemporaries called him the ‘Red Priest.’ **If Davide Monti had had red hair, I might have thought I was seeing Vivaldi!**

Monti, as guest director, led the newly formed Adelaide Baroque Orchestra in a whirlwind of Vivaldi’s music. Pauses for breath were provided by readings from historic sources and from Robert Desaix’s book, *Night Letters* read authoritatively by Charles Southwood. It was very well curated, the readings set the scene and sometimes the music crept in and sometimes it exploded. **The intensity and contrasts kept one on the edge of the seat; Monti’s total immersion in and command of the music unified the whole ensemble. They felt the pauses together and attacked the openings as one.**

There was variety in the program; even though Vivaldi is always recognisable he is inventive enough to surprise the listener. The concertos for different combinations changed the sonorities and brought players into the spotlight. **The Violin Concerto *Winter* highlighted Davide’s natural improvisation talents; he and his violin are one. The background colour of the ensemble was brittle and clear like ice while Davide fluttered and danced above them.**

Visiting cellist Anthony Albrecht made the virtuosic acrobatics of the G minor Cello Concerto sound effortless! His amazing bowing shaped the phrases and flew around the cello. The cunning accompaniments were sometimes only upper strings or just lower strings leaving the cello in the spotlight.

Even the bassoonist, Jackie Newcomb had her spectacular moments! The Concerto for Recorder, Oboe, Violin and Bassoon was demanding and showy for all instruments and was executed with drive and enthusiasm.

The Concerto ‘per l’Orchestra di Dresda’ involving two oboes, two recorders and two solo violins had blocks of colour as the instruments alternated that sounded like playing on three keyboards of an organ. The oboists Jane Downer and Doug Patterson performed on their simple Baroque oboes with such a mellow sound. Jayne Varnish and Lynton Rivers played as one with the melting tone of their recorders. **The two violins, Davide Monti and Simone Slattery achieved a perfect virtuosic duet despite being at opposite ends of the platform.**

As in all the Concertos, the accompanying instruments were balanced, sensitive and the continuo parts inventive and grounding. The violone, played by Robert Nairne gave that sonorous depth so important to Baroque music and partnered the cello in some nifty passages! The Italian harpsichord had a light, delicate sound that added a distinctive timbre especially to the strings. Either Anne Whelan or Katerina Brown were always playing! As were all the continuo players! The tutti players were synchronised, always aware and full of energy supporting the soloists. The whole concert given by the Adelaide Baroque Orchestra was a delight and rapturously received by the audience. Look out for their next appearance on November 24.

Gabrielle Scherrer