

## ADELAIDE FESTIVAL REVIEW 2019: NEW ANCIENT SONGS



Rodney Smith, *The Advertiser*

March 11, 2019 2:44pm

Subscriber only

### **New Ancient Songs** **Classical Music / Australia and Europe** **UKARIA Cultural Centre** **March 10**

With a sixteen-musician ensemble from different backgrounds and sixteen musical numbers in contrasting genres, this program seemed to promise much with possible sparks flying as cultural and stylistic traditions met head on. But the result was surprisingly tame, even cosy, with swathes of immersive contemplation and not a little navel gazing.

Even Peter Sculthorpe was only represented by two charming vignettes *Little Serenade* and *Looking Back*, both slightly sentimental and perhaps sugar coated. It was the same story with John Rodgers' *Carolling 3*, Hollis Taylor's *Night Shift*, Ella Macens' *The Lake*, Erkki Veltheim's *Ingress* and *A Faraway Landscape* (at dusk).

Too much stasis and too little action.

Energy and edgy angles had to be sought out in unexpected places. Brett Dean's argumentative and waspish *Intimate Decisions* for solo viola took flight in a tour de force from Caroline Henbest and the irrepressible Kirsty McCahon played up Hollis Taylor's skittish *Banana Paper* for all it was worth.

Unsurprisingly vocalists Emily Wurramara and Alice Skye, whose songs include strong indigenous elements, gave listeners the greatest contrast albeit in a gentle and almost self-effacing manner.

There was no raw emotion here, but Emily Wurramara's *Ngerraberrakernama* and Alice Skye's *You are The Mountains* contained memorable, touching moments with catchy tunes nicely arranged by Erkki Veltheim.

**- Rodney Smith**