

THE AUSTRALIAN STRING QUARTET PLAYS WESTLAKE AND DEBUSSY AT UKARIA



The Australian String Quartet bring empathy and passion to the music of Westlake and Debussy.

Rodney Smith, *The Advertiser*

Subscriber only | December 16, 2019 12:21pm

When I heard the Australian String Quartet play this same program along with Charles Ives' *String Quartet No 1* at the Town Hall in September, Nigel Westlake's new *String Quartet No 3, Sacred Sky*, impressed with its strength and solidity, while Debussy's *G minor Quartet* exuded his hallmark capricious lightness.

But this time, with only the Westlake and Debussy on the menu, the latter took on a tensile strength and cohesion it previously lacked.

Expect the unexpected with live performance.

And Westlake's new piece appeared lighter and more whimsical by comparison.

Indeed, the ASQ's obvious empathy and passion for the music ensured an interpretation that swept along from start to finish, carrying all before it.

Its opening and closing movements seemed almost sturdy in a Brahmsian way, although there was no mistaking Debussy's groundbreaking harmonic freedom.

And the ASQ's magically diaphanous colourations of the second movement and rapt intensity in the muted third movement drew listeners into Debussy's impressionist world with rare persuasion.

Perhaps the ASQ's interpretation of Westlake's *Sacred Sky* is maturing with time.

Its balance of banter and soliloquy, plus mercurial changes of mood and intent, were certainly more clearly on display.

With three shortish movements and a lengthy finale entitled *The Journey Begins*, the centre of gravity was undoubtedly its final pages, elegantly and rhetorically delivered by an ever-alert ASQ.

Australian String Quartet

UKARIA Cultural Centre
December 13