

QUATUOR ÉBÈNE'S IMMERSION IN BEETHOVEN ABSORBING AND DAUNTING



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Rodney Smith, *The Advertiser*

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Catching high flying French Quatuor Ébène for one of only two Australian concerts on its *Beethoven Around the World* tour was quite a coup for UKARIA.

Quatuor Ébène has an enviable reputation for both musical breadth and depth and the latter was definitely on show in their program of Beethoven's second, tenth and eleventh string quartets.

There was no self-indulgence here and the quartet's rich tonal palette was always at the service of the music.

Furthermore, their ability to project ambience and atmosphere is superb, so the early *G major Op 18* sparkled deliciously, the darkly serious *F minor Op 95* sounded hugely edgy and menacing and the warm-hearted *Eb Major Op 74* contained rose-hued golden sounds exactly fit for purpose.

In fact, Quatuor Ébène is an immensely purposeful group whose utter immersion in the music was both absorbing and daunting.

Listeners felt no option but to journey every step of the way with them, and given Beethoven's volatile temperament, that's a big ask.

Yet from the merest whisper to absolute sonic explosions, Quatuor Ébène always put themselves on the line first, for us to follow.

Undoubtedly Beethoven's thoroughly bad-tempered *F minor Quartet* proved the most arresting reading, its almost continual agitation and constant outbursts leading to virtual percussive sonorities from the players.

By contrast, the far mellower *Eb major Quartet* engendered an almost intoxicating kaleidoscope of mood colours that gave rise to delight, surprise and admiration in their lucky listeners.

Quatuor Ébène
UKARIA Cultural Centre
October 28