

Powerful energy, vibrancy, danger and astonishment



Melanie Walters, The Advertiser
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IN his recent work *Spirit of the Wild*, Australian composer Nigel Westlake portrays the “powerful energy, the vibrancy, the danger and the astonishment” he experienced while visiting Bathurst Harbour in Tasmania.

This chamber concerto for oboe, string quartet, double bass and piano, was performed by Diana Doherty and the Spirit Ensemble in their concert at UKARIA on Sunday.

Much of the work is characterised by an intense rhythmic drive, with irregular accents and energetic cross-rhythms.



Despite the extreme technical demands, both the soloist and ensemble maintained excellent rhythmic precision and impressive intonation throughout this performance.

The soaring melody lines showcased Doherty’s exceptionally controlled phrasing and beautiful tone, especially in the very upper limits of her instrument’s range.

Benjamin Britten’s *Phantasy Quartet for Oboe and String Trio* of 1932 might be almost 90 years old, but it retains the youthfulness and vitality of its composer, who wrote the work at the age of 18.

In this work, Britten created a range of compelling textures, particularly in the softer, sparser phrases and in moments combining pizzicato and arco in the strings.

The complex ensemble writing in this piece was skilfully handled by all performers.

Also on the program was Mozart's oboe quartet and Fauré's first piano quartet.

In the Fauré, the strings brought out a lovely range of colours, while pianist Bernadette Harvey maintained clarity and refined phrasing even in the most dramatic moments.

In the Mozart, Doherty's immaculate technique and musical shaping was again on display, and she brought her signature joyous energy to the final movement.

Spirit Ensemble

UKARIA Cultural Centre

August 5