

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL 2020 REVIEW: ROOMFUL OF TEETH

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Rodney Smith, *The Advertiser*

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Roomful of Teeth

FESTIVAL – Classical Music / USA

UKARIA Cultural Centre

March 7

UKARIA's major contribution to the Adelaide Festival continued this Saturday with three more of its nine-concert long-weekend series.

Roomful of Teeth is an American a capella vocal group that progresses in the grand tradition of Kronos and others in redefining what many imagine ensembles can and should do.

From scat to belt via throat and pure westernised classical singing they bring a whole new meaning to synthesis, especially when all these are encompassed in a single work or simultaneously.

In particular two movements from their iconic signature number, Caroline Shaw's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Partita for Eight Voices* proved the point.

The UK's Heath String Quartet has made a big reputation with its interpretations of Michael Tippett's five quartets and their performance of Quartet Number 2, together with Beethoven's Op 18 No 3 in the first of two afternoon concerts unequivocally demonstrated why.

The degree of belief and commitment they brought to Tippett's masterful score was palpable.

Furthermore, as they continually showed in both the Tippett and the Beethoven, they are an ensemble with highly refined technical polish and outstanding tonal balance that can achieve formidable tensile strength when needed.

Superb Australian soprano Siobhan Stagg, now based in Europe, is enjoying a successful international operatic career and her recital of French song by Debussy, Poulenc and Messiaen later in the afternoon therefore showed her versatility in no uncertain terms.

Messiaen's *Poèmes pour Mi* was unarguably the standout with riveting power and atmospheric warmth on display in equal quantities. Insightful and intelligent accompaniment from Timothy Young helped bring Messiaen's brilliant canvass to life.