



Ensemble Q members Imants Larsens (viola), Anne Horton (violin), Trish Dean (cello) and Natsuko Yoshimoto (violin). Picture: Supplied

Ensemble Q
UKARIA Cultural Centre
May 29

In the visual arts, ahistorical curation – displaying works from different cultural eras aside one another – is used to draw out unexpected connections and deeper meanings within the artworks.

This term is rarely used in reference to music, but ahistorical curation is an excellent description for Ensemble Q’s Fantasias program.

The concert was a “conversation between centuries”. It wove together works from across the past 400 years; the audience was asked not to applaud until the very end to allow the diverse pieces to “mingle”.

Contrasts between movements for strings, chamber works for winds, and solo pieces also gave the program a fantastic range of colours and textures.

Ensemble Q was augmented by some exceptional young musicians from the Queensland Conservatorium. Shana Hosino's warm tone and sensitive phrasing in the cor anglais solos for Byrd's Ave Verum Corpus were particularly impressive.

I was sceptical about the predominance of Bruckner's music. But Paul Dean's excellent arrangements of Os Justi that bookended the concert gave it a cohesive narrative. The opening arrangement – for doubled bassoons, clarinets and horns, with double bass – revealed the subtlety and nuance of the movement. The clarion counterpoint of Henry Purcell's Fantasias for String Quartet and the ethereal sounds of Saariaho's Dreaming Chaconne were a refreshing contrast to Bruckner's rich harmonies.

Oboist Huw Jones gave a truly captivating performance of one of Britten's Six Metamorphoses, while cellist Trish Dean and bassist Phoebe Russell captured the intensity of Schnittke's Hymnus II.

Rounding out this very packed concert was Mozart's Serenade for winds and a movement from a Kurtag string quartet.

- Melanie Walters