

Doherty breathes new life into gems

MUSIC

Ukaria 24.
Curator and oboe: Diana Doherty.
Ukaria Cultural Centre,
Mount Barker Summit,
September 7

GRAHAM STRAHLE

Audiences know her as one of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's stars, but to see oboist Diana Doherty in a chamber music setting reveals a lot more about her powers as a musician. In the company of musical friends and playing music of her own choosing, she gains even more in stature and is exhilarating to witness.

Curating this year's Ukaria 24 in the Adelaide Hills was the first time Doherty has directed a music event, and her brief was simple: to do whatever she liked in a weekend of music making.

Doherty brought in 10 of her musical colleagues—mainly from the SSO and Melbourne Symphony Orchestra—and treated a lucky audience to a series of gloriously unfettered, inspired performances.

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Brahms and Schubert piano works in new arrangements by Alexandre Oguey for oboe and strings served as the basis of the opening concert, Reimaginings.

Dark and brooding, Brahms's Intermezzo in A major possessed yet deeper gravitas in this new guise, the

players taking it spaciouly and Doherty tugging its melody with tenderness. The oboe almost becomes a living, breathing creature in her hands, emerging from the shadowy recesses to speak forth with rare naturalness and eloquence. Her tone in this and Schubert's *Fantasia in F minor* was soft and immaculately controlled.

Both arrangements deserve to become staples of the chamber repertoire. Either side of these, Berlin-based Australian pianist-composer Paul Hankinson played compositions that echoed Brahms and Schubert in serene waves of arpeggios. These were something to savour.

Just how brilliantly Doherty can take repertoire for other instruments and call it her own was illustrated even more convincingly in Franck's *Violin Sonata in A major*, in an adaptation of this work she has made for oboe. Partnered superbly by pianist Bernadette Harvey, the expressive canvas seemed wider and the flow of ideas more liberated than one is used to hearing.

The second concert, *Book Music: A Tribute to Tim Winton*, held unique interest. Narrator Paul Kildea read portions of Winton's novel *Eyrie* that were inspired by a performance that Doherty gave some years ago in Perth of Vaughan Williams's *Oboe Concerto*, which the novelist attended. Here, with chamber strings substituting for orchestra, was an intriguing recreation, and her performance perfectly lived up to Winton's description of an impassioned, rapturously animated soloist who wins over the listener.

It felt like a circle of miracles had just been completed.

The Australian

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