

Review: Richard Tognetti and Erin Helyard, at UKARIA

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Richard Tognetti and Erin Helyard.

Erin Helyard's forte is piano – fortepiano, that is.

It gets more confusing when you consider that a forte on the fortepiano isn't much louder than the piano on a pianoforte.

Is a fortepiano a piano? Probably – it certainly isn't a forte.

Erin Helyard understands this early precursor of the modern piano as well as anyone and his partnership with violinist Richard Tognetti illustrated the beauty of the instrument in a chamber music setting.



No fear of drowning out the violin, rather the violin has to defer to the keyboard, as Richard Tognetti clearly understood. The clarity of sound leads to striking effects especially in the bass, where the modern piano is inclined to be muddy.

The pedals are operated with the knees, and are used far less often, but when they are employed they can produce lovely sounds.

A striking moment came in the finale of Beethoven's Spring Sonata when the return of the theme was bathed in a wash of pedal that was delicate and gorgeous. The instrument, made in Adelaide by Richard Schaumloffl, looks beautiful and sounds superb.

The program stuck to Bach and Beethoven, and was full of interest, not least because of Tognetti's unique manner of playing – full of energy, with unexpected dynamic changes, unusual articulation and extremely lengthened final notes, accompanied by bodily movements that he might have acquired on a surfboard.

It might be unorthodox – I don't imagine Tognetti has much time for orthodoxy – but it is unfailingly interesting, and when combined with the lively, characterful playing of Helyard, the musical result is very engaging

Richard Tognetti and Erin Helyard

UKARIA

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