

New Zealand Quartet with pianist Anton Kuerti in Ottawa  
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**New Zealand String Quartet showcases ensemble precision**

BY RICHARD TODD, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN JULY 28, 2009

Another big crowd last night at Dominion-Chalmers, 900 or more, came to hear the New Zealand String Quartet and pianist Anton Kuerti Monday evening. It's hard to imagine anyone who went away unsatisfied.

The program opened with a short work by Mendelssohn called Capriccio for String Quartet, op. 81. It was performed with that combination, quintessential to the composer, of lightness of touch and melodic richness.

On a technical level, there was little to nothing to complain of. Precision of ensemble, blend, intonation and all the rest of it was spot on.

Next came an exceptionally interesting piece composed jointly, so to speak, by Johann Sebastian Bach and the New Zealand composer Ross Harris. Based on the 25th of Bach's Goldberg Variations, it begins by stating the variation almost literally, but soon wanders into a kind of concentration of the original counterpoint. For a while, this technique piles beauty upon beauty, but toward the end evolves into a kind of mathematical abstraction that seemed to lose some listeners on Monday.

The first half of the program ended with a centred and delightful account of Haydn's Quartet in D, op. 64, no. 5. The first two movements were especially pleasing, the first on account of a nice plummy sound that cellist Rolf Gjelstern produced in appropriate places.

The Dvorak Piano Quintet, op. 81 is among the most popular works of its genre. A good performance never fails to rouse an audience with its extravagant melodic richness and the fieriness of its finale. Monday had all these qualities in spades and the performance was rewarded with an instant standing ovation

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