

Cellist Clancy Newman
guest artist on tour in Australia
“a lush, generous tone”

Trio harness power of understatement

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SELBY AND FRIENDS
City Recital Hall, March 22

KATHRYN SELBY'S concert series has always been a treasure trove of interesting repertoire and artists. For her first tour this year one of her best finds is cellist Clancy Newman.

Newman is a Juilliard graduate who has a busy solo career in the US, but here he demonstrated a lush, generous tone that marks him out as an ideal chamber music player. The polished tones of the former Australian String Quartet leader, Sophie Rowell, completed the trio.

Selby's other discovery for this concert was American composer Paul Schoenfield's *Cafe Music*, a light-hearted but not insubstantial trio inspired by a casual stint as pianist at the composer's local restaurant.

The three-movement work is a deftly arranged travel journal of vernacular styles from New York rags to middle-European lullabies. The key here was negotiating the different dialects without sounding like a hopelessly lost tourist.

Selby led the way, with an easy mastery of the Gershwin-esque melodies, while Newman and Rowell added their own idiomatic gestures with impressive versatility.

Cafe Music was flanked by two more weighty pieces, Beethoven's *Ghost* Trio in D

major, Op. 70 No. 1, and Shostakovich's Piano Trio in E minor, Op. 67. The Beethoven was well-crafted but a little underplayed: the thin, spooky violin and cello of the central "ghost" movement sounded washed out.

By contrast, the opening of the Shostakovich was gloriously eerie, triumphantly weird, with Newman negotiating the opening melody all in harmonics with the nail-biting grace of a tightrope walker. The *allegro ma non troppo* was a savage dance, with violin and cello not afraid to push out raw, grating sounds in their quest for volume, a tight and exciting display of ensemble.

It was, however, Selby's solo at the opening of the third movement which made the biggest impression: simple chords, ringing out without commentary, becoming a gaunt underlay for the heart-wrenching melody above. Sometimes, understatement is the most powerful tool of all.

This concert is repeated at Bowral's Chevalier College at 5pm today and Turramurra Uniting Church tomorrow at 2pm.

<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/music/trio-harness-power-of-understatement-20120323-1vp0w.html>