



Blown away by horn flair

Perfectly executed collaborations and brilliant soloists lifted this concert to crescendo heights

THE 42nd International Horn Symposium held in Brisbane culminated in the Queensland Symphony Orchestra's *Ultimate Orchestral Showpiece* concert, featuring performances by some of the world's greatest horn players and a concert first for Australia with the addition of a Vienna horn.

The American Horn Quartet played the showy and brilliant *Koncertstuck* by Schumann with joy and confident expertise.

These four soloists ably demonstrated their individual virtuosity with solo arpeggios, while collaborating perfectly as

an ensemble with the principal solo line passing deftly from one horn to another. Often this was demonstrated in just a few notes with extraordinary technical skill.

The lyrical passages of the Romanze movement, harmoniously played by the horns, were well supported by the orchestra. An encore of the intriguingly arranged *Sabre Dance* by Khachaturian, without orchestral accompaniment, was whimsical but exquisitely realised.

A highlight of the evening was Australian-born Hector McDonald's rendition of the *Horn Concerto in C minor* by Franz Strauss. After explaining the differences between the French and the Vienna horn, he treated his audience to a meticulous interpretation of this classic work through the rich, sweet sound of his antique instrument, correctly described as "noble and expressive". This was

The Ultimate Orchestral Showpiece - Maestro Series

Queensland Symphony Orchestra conductor Johannes Fritsch, soloists Valentine Eschmann and Hector McDonald, American Horn Quartet Concert Hall QPAC one night only

Reviewer: Suzannah Conway
 Reviewed: Friday, July 23

music-making of the highest order from a true master, who managed to play this most fiendish of instruments without it ever appearing to go out of tune.

Valentine Eschmann, a 22-year-old French horn player making his debut as a concert soloist, began with Mozart's charming *Horn Concerto No.4*.

But poor intonation and little

sense of Mozart's style made heavy weather of the piece, particularly the famous *Rondo*. With such luminaries as Barry Tuckwell in the audience, perhaps he lost his nerve – although he undoubtedly has talent.

Rounding off the evening was Bartok's masterly *Concerto for Orchestra*, showcasing the orchestra's talents with every instrument and section featured.

Chief conductor Johannes Fritsch clearly relished the work, and his musicianship brought together the various moods of the concerto within a carefully crafted and rich orchestral palette. The second movement, featuring orchestral soloists, balanced woodwind and brass to great effect, along with strong additions from the strings and percussion.

It was brought together in the final crescendo with great passion and was a resounding success.



TALENT: American Horn Quartet
 Kristina Mascher, Geoffrey Winter,
 Kerry Turner and Charles Putnam.