



Alba Brass

Alba Brass exceeded all expectations in their musical offering to Mid Argyll Arts Association's November concert last Saturday in Ardrishaig Public Hall. The eclectic choice of music ensured that there was something to please everyone.

The ensemble opened with a lively interpretation of music from the Royal Fireworks by Handel, arr Roberts followed by Three Love Songs – the Eriscay Love Lilt, Ae Fond Kiss and My Love is like a Red, Red Rose – all arranged by Alan Fernie. These were played with sensitive shaping and a warmth of tone and blend rarely heard in similar groups.

The first half concluded with a piece which was specially commissioned by Alba Brass from folk musician Martin Green. It was titled 'Souch' and comprised three movements which stretched the musicians' technical skills to the extreme and encouraged sounds that one would rarely encounter. However, it was performed with panache and was a talking point for the audience at the interval.

The second half opened with another commissioned work, 'Shorthand of Emotion' composed by brass player, Ryan Quigley. This was a complete contrast to the previous item in that there was a more melodic element throughout the various moods as expressed in the title. The music then changed to a truly swinging account of Gershwin's 'I Got Rhythm' which set the feet tapping and in which the players clearly let themselves go.

Still on familiar ground, there followed a triptych of tangos – 'La Cumparsita', Rodriguez, the 'Killer Tango' by Sonny Kompanek and finally the 'Libertango' composed by tango specialist Piazzola cleverly arranged with one or two quirky bits by the ensemble's trombonist, Paul Stone.

The evening concluded with a dazzling and breathless account of Sousa's March 'The Stars and Stripes Forever' which featured a virtuosa obligati from Bede Williams, coronet and Andy McKreel, tuba. This received the biggest ovation of the evening from the large audience and was richly deserved.

Alba Brass are an ensemble of the highest calibre. Apart from the mastery of their instruments, they perform with excellent articulation, attention to detail within the score and a wide range of tonal colours and contrasts, all presented in an informative and entertaining style.

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