



## **Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Saxophone Concert Review (18/09/21)**

A curtain-sided lorry, lines of traffic cones and a sunny afternoon – where was this, I hear you ask? Answer – Kilmory car park, the venue of the first ever Mid Argyll Arts Association drive-in concert and what a concert it was. The musicians, all saxophonists from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland only recently formed a saxophone quartet to perform at our concert. We were delighted to welcome them to Argyll for their first performance as a quartet. For three of the four performers this was the first time they had performed in over a year.

The Quartet (Andrew, Dean, Jack and Richard) introduced each piece, giving us some background to both the role of the saxophone and the composer, with many of the pieces arranged by the group themselves.

Purcell's "Festival Rondeau" was the dramatic opening, a work very well-known across all age groups so a perfect start to the concert. Following this was a work composed specifically for a saxophone quartet in 1857 by Jean-Baptiste Singelée (a friend of Adolph Sax, the inventor of the saxophone). We were treated to the traditional Andante before moving onto the exciting Allegro.

The third selection of pieces were all by Debussy. This was a surprising choice as the saxophone is not really associated with the Impressionist period however it showed the versatility of both the saxophones and performers. "Arabesque No.2" was followed by "The Little Shepherd" which was delightful, calm and serene with

only the sound of the river flowing through the trees and birds singing along. The jaunty “Cakewalk” completed this very varied section.

“Air on a G String” by Bach and known to many as a certain TV advert was the next offering. The opening descending bass line showed the depth and quality of the baritone saxophone in much more than just a supporting role. This music predates the invention of the saxophone by more than a hundred years.

Gershwin and a selection of show tunes from the Swing Era were just what we needed after the relaxing “Air”. The four musical songs, all showcasing different styles, certainly had the audience smiling, toe-tapping and “singing” along. In the final piece “I Got Rhythm” we were all moving to the music, including the Quartet. Closing your eyes, you could just imagine that you were relaxing in a jazz club – anywhere in the world!

The next piece, “L’Arlesienne Exhibition”, is a collection of highlights for the saxophone in an orchestral situation. The music was composed by Hiroki Takahashi, with many familiar themes from both film and TV (including “The Apprentice”) – thoroughly enjoyable.

Gershwin’s “An American in Paris” portrays the many sights and sounds that Gershwin experienced there in the 1920’s. While it was composed for an orchestra which included saxophones and car horns, the music played by the Quartet didn’t include any car horns – just skilled and imaginative saxophonists!

A change of pace to enjoy some relaxed, laid-back music from West Africa followed with Will Gregory’s “High Life”. The repeated rhythms with the peace of Kilmory, the cooling air and the gentle river flowing was almost hypnotic and brought our concert to a finish. The audience cheered, clapped and blew their cars horns to ensure that the Quartet provided an encore. “Witch Hunt” by Ulrich Schultheiss was the encore - a dramatic and fiery work challenging all the performers and bringing a fantastic concert to a close.

Some quotes from our fantastic Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Saxophone Quartet – “a unique special event”, “the cars didn’t feel a barrier”, “had a blast” and finally “what an experience”.

MAAA would like to thank the 19<sup>th</sup> Argyll Scouts (Explorers) for car parking assistance and so ensuring that everybody was able to park, enjoy the concert and exit the car park safely. Traffic cones and high viz waistcoats were loaned by MacLeods and the wagon we used as a stage by Fergusons Butchers. Picnic boxes were pre-ordered from Lucy’s Ardfern. Argyll and Bute Council allowed the use of their premises.

This concert was supported by Chamber Music Scotland and Creative Scotland.