

Dynamic Display of virtuosity from London based duo Philip Attard, Saxophone and Christine Zerafa, piano

Carlisle Music Society's first ever classical saxophone recital surprised and delighted an audience largely unfamiliar with the instrument played in this genre. A diverse programme exposed the versatility of both soprano and alto saxophones in wonderful collaboration with the piano.

The programme opened with Saint-Saëns' Sonata for Oboe and Piano in D major. The melancholic simplicity of the opening movement was masterfully portrayed by the delicate touch of the piano combined with the rich dark colour of the soprano saxophone producing a controlled elegance. The *molto allegro* was a brilliant display of virtuosity, allowing a dialogue to develop between pianist and saxophonist, both playfully skipping along in tandem, intertwining and responding to each other's phrases through intricate passages of finger work.

In contrast to the speed of the Saint-Saëns, Eugene Bozza's Bach-inspired Aria displayed Philip's ability to control the melodic line on alto saxophone. His breathing never interrupted the shape of the phrases and worked in symbiosis with Christine's sparsely placed chords to send sounds floating away.

Following Decruck's Sonata for Saxophone and Piano, filled with shimmering pentatonic melodies weaving together, the first half ended with Demersseman's Carnival de Venise. Here, Philip's phenomenal melodic fluency and evenness throughout the registers was amplified by Christine's sensitive touch creating the space needed to contrast with the dramatic saxophone line.

The highlight of the second half had to be Yoshimatsu 's Fuzzy Bird Sonata. Imitating the rhythm and sound of birds, this demanding work for both players was delivered with exacting precision. The opening dialogue showed impressive rhythmic accuracy, clearly illustrating the telepathy and connection between both performers. Apparently effortlessly, Philip soared through the registers of the alto saxophone, right up through the altissimo register, exhibiting extended techniques such as slap tonguing and multiphonics with ease. Underpinning this was the intense rhythmic piano driving the music along with a sense of urgency and strong pulse.
Simply sensational!

Justin Kent
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