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Musical minds meet with Mendelssohn

CONCERT

Pacifica Quartet and friends
 Winthrop Hall
 Review: Neville Cohn



On several important political issues, Australia and the US see eye to eye.

The same could be said of matters musical, with the Illinois-based Pacifica Quartet and four of Australia's finest string players, Paul Wright and Shaun Lee-Chen (violins), Alex Brogan (viola) and Eve Silver (cello), joining forces at the weekend for a thrilling account of Felix Mendelssohn's

Octet, surely the most inspired chamber work written by a teenager.

Not the least of the pleasures of this performance was the quality of corporate tone which, at its most muscular, gave sonorities of organ-like richness, a fine foil for gossamer-light utterances in the scherzo.

If ever there was a meeting of musical minds, it was this, with the Octet performance, which brought the house down, the crowning

achievement of three concerts at the weekend in which the Pacifica players offered a cornucopia of Mendelssohn's music for string quartet.

There is a mistaken widespread view that nearly all of Mendelssohn's art is superficial and devoid of profundity. While much of his music borders on the trivial, in an account of the Quartet in F minor, opus 80, a response to his grief at the sudden death of his beloved sister, Fanny, the Pacifica musicians revealed the sheer depth and power the composer was capable of when so moved.

Whether essaying Mendelssohn's masterworks or some of his music that borders on the frivolous, the players invariably gave point and meaning to the music's many felicities. Certainly, the Pacifica Quartet marshalled Mendelssohn's floodtides of notes in such an expert way that even his more glib offerings sounded better than they, in fact, are.

This was a concert series to cherish, yet another instance of the immense importance of the Festival to the concert life of Perth.