

One of the eminent string quartets of our era, the Ensō String Quartet, undertakes its debut national tour for Musica Viva

30 May - 18 June 2016



“...the quartet brought it off with smouldering power — half honey, half molten lava...”

The Washington Post

Founded at Yale University in 1999, the Ensō String Quartet has, in a decade and a half, risen to the front rank of string ensembles.

Described by *The Strad* as “thrilling”, and praised by *The Washington Post* for its “glorious sonorities”, the Ensō String Quartet has won numerous awards, including top prizes at the Concert Artists Guild Competition and the Banff International String Quartet Competition. In the words of *Classical Voice*, it is “**one of the eminent string quartets of our era**”.

This May, the Ensō String Quartet returns to Australian shores following its enthralling appearances at the Huntington Estate Music Festival in 2012. On this visit, the ensemble undertakes its **debut national tour for Musica Viva**, exploring all corners of the string quartet repertoire.

Commencing the two programs to be toured around the country is a **brand new work** written especially for the Quartet by revered Australian composer **Brenton Broadstock AM**, inspired by the journey of a child refugee to find safe haven in Australia.

Speaking about this commissioned piece, cellist Richard Belcher says, “We’re thrilled about it. The chance to tour Australia with a new piece from one of Australia’s most respected composers, that’s going to be an amazing experience – we can’t wait.”

Alongside this, the Ensō String Quartet will perform the **Beethoven ‘Harp’ Quartet, Op. 74**, which Belcher describes as “the most stunning, inspirational piece, with an epic quality to it.”

Then, the second half of Program One is tinged with Spanish flavour, featuring music by Spanish composer Turina, together with a quartet by Ginastera, one of Argentina’s leading 20th-century figures.

Violist Melissa Reardon describes **Turina’s Serenata for String Quartet, Op. 87** as “atmospheric, with lots of colour, and a little bit sexy.”

She continues about **Ginastera’s String Quartet No. 2**, “It definitely has Ginastera’s distinct and unique voice. There’s an athletic quality to this piece; there are some movements which are much more heartfelt; there are movements which are more spooky and magical.”

Concluding Program Two are an **arrangement by violinist Maureen Nelson** featuring music from the Renaissance era and a beautiful quartet by Ravel.

Nelson says, “I love playing early music, but the quartet repertoire doesn’t have any.”

Ravel’s String Quartet in F major is significant to the group – “It’s such a beautiful piece,” says Belcher. “That was one of the first pieces we played together at Yale – we absolutely love it!”

Of returning to Australia, Belcher adds, “This Australian trip has been something that we’ve been looking forward to for such a long time. It’s going to be really exciting for all of us, and I think that any time that you get to go to new places with such an esteemed organisation as Musica Viva is going to be pretty thrilling.”

Ensō String Quartet will tour to Sydney, Brisbane, Newcastle, Hobart, Melbourne, Canberra, Perth and Adelaide. For full tour information visit musicaviva.com.au/Enso

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