

Reviews

Quartet's mix of wind and piano a winner

DIETER Mack has a wicked sense of humour and it came out when the German composer introduced Ensemble Selisih's Saturday concert, illustrating the music to come with crow-calls and vocalised gamelan patterns.

The quartet's mix of piano and three wind instruments proved to be a winning one, brilliantly deployed in different works written for the group.

Mack's own *Selisih*, a lively, conversational duo that has given the musicians their collective name, set Daniela Wahler's phlegmatic baritone saxophone against Markus Rombach's alto instrument as it shifted from howling to cajoling and beyond, into a nail-biting musical prowl.

At the end of the programme, Mack's *Trio III* similarly moved from a slightly bluesy ambience to knife-edge interchanges between instruments.

Whereas Chang-soon Ryu's *Quartet* focused obsessively (and effectively) on the power of one note over those around it, Robin Toan's *Twitter* took to the great outdoors. Who might have thought walking the dog in a bird-filled

MUSIC

- **What:** Ensemble Selisih
- **Where:** University Music Theatre
- **Reviewer:** William Dart

park would occasion such invention? Mack had warned us Dylan Lardelli's *Two Bells* dwelt at the border of inaudibility; thanks to these musicians, not even a whisper went unnoticed. Here, as in Mack's later *Trio III*, their balance at minimal dynamic levels was awe-inspiring.

Kiwi flautist Elizabeth Farrell offered two impressive solo turns.

Michael Norris' *BADB* was steeped in the world of Messiaen, with piano chimes and the occasional flute shriek leading to a melodramatic ending — a bristling progression, relished by Farrell and pianist Mathias Trapp.

Gillian Whitehead's *Taurangi* is a piece many flautists now have in their repertoire, and no wonder, when it moves so effortlessly from moody piano chords à la Bill Evans to a heartfelt waiata. Passages scored for flute harmonics and a ping-pong ball on piano strings might sound self-conscious but, on this occasion, nothing could have seemed more natural in evoking this composer's crystalline soundworld.