



Belgian pianist hits right notes for Waikato

On stage are Beth Georgiou, left, Daniel Loy, Daniel Verstappen, Callum Neilsen and Samara Nation at the Gallagher Academy of Performing Arts.

An international composer joined Waikato musicians on stage and Cambridge promoter Joe Harrop says we need more events like it.

International classical crossover pianist and composer Daniel Verstappen performed at the Gallagher Academy of Performing Arts in Hamilton last month, presenting works from his latest album, Reconnection.

Featuring British violinist Beth Georgiou, the audience lapped up the programme of Verstappen's original neoclassical compositions and well-known musical treats.

The concert was part of the Belgian artist's Reconnection World Tour, a melodic pilgrimage spanning continents, showcasing Verstappen's virtuosity.

His concerts were supported by the Belgian Embassy, Flanders, Sabam for Culture, Gallagher Animal Management, Auckland Unesco City of Music, and classical musician-promoter Joe Harrop.

Harrop, a professional musician in his own right, is resident in Cambridge. He is keen for artists such as Verstappen to perform in the region.

"Musicians confidently performing their own music, happily reaching out to audiences – we need this in the Waikato. People love it.

"Daniel showed how it can be done, and I'm always happy to help more of this kind of concert happen here."

Performing alongside Verstappen in Hamilton was British violinist Beth Georgiou. Georgiou is a composer, pro-

ducer and accomplished multi-instrumentalist based in Belgium.

Born in the United Kingdom, Georgiou studied violin, saxophone and piano at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music in London.

As a multi-instrumentalist, Georgiou has performed around the world as a solo instrumentalist as well as part of ensembles and orchestras.

The Belgian pianist shared the Dr John Gallagher Concert Chamber stage with three of the Waikato's emerging string players.

Together with violinist Daniel Loy, violist Samara Nation, and cellist Callum Neilsen, he performed From the Heart – a powerful original composition.

Local Waikato University student, Car-

ly Hannah, joined Verstappen to perform Floating, a piece Daniel wrote for four hands. Verstappen believes this kind of collaboration lines up with the main theme of The Reconnection World Tour, which is a Bridge Between Cultures.

"Hamilton feels like an artist-friendly city," Verstappen said.

"The Gallagher Academy is a wonderful performance centre and the concert chamber has excellent acoustics. I enjoyed sharing my music with the people of the Waikato, and get to know some of their emerging Bocelli, Ennio Morricone, Anastacia, Amy MacDonald, Wyclef Jean, Angie Stone, and Chaka Khan.

playing the piano at the age of 5 and gained his masters music degree at Lemmensinstituut in Leuven, Belgium.

After a stint as a professional double bass player, Verstappen returned to the piano and composing, crafting his own musical identity, blending classical elegance with contemporary innovation.

His aim is to connect generations and cultures, creating an experience and giving classical music a new look, thereby reaching and inspiring young people.

The "crossover-classical" nature of Verstappen's music struck a chord with local cellist Callum Neilsen.

"I've never played anything like Daniel's music before," he said.

"It's fun and different to the traditional pieces I've been playing, but it's also full of excitement and emotion, especially performing it with people my own age."

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