

# concert

## CONCERT REVIEWS

### MARICI SAXES: LIGHT

PURCELL ROOM, SOUTHBANK CENTRE, LONDON  
14 SEPTEMBER 2018

Marici Saxes may be a name familiar to many *Clarinet & Saxophone* readers, but if not, you are sure to be hearing more of them in the future. Having formed in 2010 and become something of a YouTube sensation, the Marici Saxes have recently released their debut album, *Light*, which has put them firmly in the spotlight and seen them perform live for both Classic FM and Radio 3.

This was the third time that I have heard the quartet live in the past year, and every time it has been a pleasure. The group comprises Sarah Field, Fiona Asbury, Hannah Riches and Josie Simmons, all of whom are excellent players in their own right and bring their own personalities and ideas to the quartet.

Tonight's concert opened with Simmons' arrangement of Michael Nyman's *An Eye for Optical Theory*, instantly showing off the sheer power that the quartet is capable of producing and acting as a rousing opener. One of the highlights for me was the second item, Sir Richard Rodney Bennett's beautiful setting of *Four Country Dances* (again expertly arranged by Josie Simmons). This piece demonstrated the beauty of sound created by each of the players, and the intonation and ensemble between soprano and alto, particularly when playing together in octaves, was stunning.

Throughout the concert, the quartet exhibited a vast range of colours. Michel Colombier's *Emmanuel* and John Tavener's *The Lamb* both displayed a rich, well-balanced ensemble, blending together to create a lush, cohesive sound with no player either dominating or being overpowered. For me, the quartet really comes into its own when playing their own arrangements and compositions. A particular highlight was *Suite of Irish Folk*

*Tunes* by Simmons; it was clear in this piece that the group felt completely at home and were simply enjoying making music together. Pieces like this really demonstrate how well Simmons and Riches work together as the engine room of the quartet, allowing Field and Asbury to float on top. Other notable pieces were *Tayal*, a traditional Chinese folksong, again arranged by Simmons, which called for a sopranino, two sopranos and an alto. Particularly impressive was Sarah Field's playing of the sopranino, which maintained a rich yet focused tone, despite

the fiendish nature of the instrument. Another change to the instrumentation came in Marici Saxes' own arrangement of *Waking Song* and *Daybreak Vision*

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by R Carlos Nakai, which opened the second half, played from memory at the front of the stage. This piece really exploited the excellent acoustic of the Purcell Room and demonstrated that all members of the group are fine soprano players.

It was a tribute to the group's ethos that they donated 20 percent of ticket sales to Live Music Now (LMN). I have had the chance to work with LMN and have seen first-hand the amazing work they do for young people with disabilities and older people living with dementia. I would urge readers who are not familiar with LMN to look them up.

To conclude, it was a thoroughly enjoyable evening of first-class music making from the Marici Saxes, and it was no surprise that the large and appreciative audience called them back for an encore. I for one could have listened all night.

Alastair Penman

