

# Young composers score top marks

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On the evidence of Tuesday evening's performance by a chamber orchestra drawn from the WA Symphony Orchestra, there's no shortage of promising young composers in Perth. I was astonished and gratified by the sheer quality apparent in the five works on offer.

Compositions such as these don't just happen. They require the self-discipline and creativity of the musicians and skilled, nurturing guidance from their teachers.

And how satisfying to listen to an evening of new works free of the industrial-type noise that too frequently passes for original musical thought.

Mark Holdsworth's Chamber Symphony: A Broken Vow impressed particularly with whispered harp arabesques, beautifully played by Catherine Ashley, and its moments of grim, hand-wringing anguish that gripped the attention. With grunting bassoon and fiercely focused upper woodwinds, this was a work which, with its technical ingenuity, didn't so much attract the attention as seize it, vice-like.

Alex Turley's Efflorescence demonstrated a fine feeling for what works in instrumental terms; its gentle measures were pleasingly lulling with Robyn Gray eloquent on hushed percussion and Michael Wayne in fine form on flute.

I'd have like Griffin Wright's slowly unfolding, seductively soothing Abeyance to go on much longer, with its real understanding of what works well in instrumental terms. Woodwinds, in particular, were much on their mettle.

James Bradbury's Entropy on a Clock, made for engrossing listening, too, with its cleverly effective treatment of rhythm and counter rhythm. Strings, woodwinds and vibraphone players came up trumps here.

Josiah Padmanabham's Katartizo, with its dark, deep-pitched trills, grunts and yelps, called to mind sombrely coloured, shifting patterns of a slowly revolving kaleidoscope.

Many a young composer in Europe or the US might well have envied the persuasiveness of the WASO ensemble's musical advocacy. Certainly, the disciplined cogency of its interpretations deserves high praise with laurels in particular to Semra Lee-Smith (violin) and cellist Louise McKay.

Leading WA composer James Ledger presided over the WASO ensemble and briefly interviewed each composer before conducting their work.

This was an evening to remember – and for all the right reasons.

**WASO Composition Project 2014**  
**10 June**  
**ABC Studio, East Perth**