

## Weekend review

# Duo plays old, new and Spanish

### MUSIC

#### Australian Guitar Duo

7.30pm, August 22, 2008, Wesley Music Centre.

Reviewer: Harry White

The atmosphere was lively and playful as the audience made their way back to their seats for the second half of the performance.

The crowd was as enthusiastic as one could wish, and in fact I suspect the performers, Jacob Cordover and Rupert Boyd from the Australian Guitar Duo, were not the only guitarists in the room.

It is possible to give an accurate simplistic account of the repertoire for classical guitar – it is old, new, or Spanish. The program reflected this, with all the composers being born before 1602, after 1922, or indeed Spanish.

Of the three styles, the duo had the best feel for the newer works. The way they played *The Suite* by William Lawes (1602-1645) and *Galliard to the Flat Pavane* by John Johnston (c.1540-1595) reminded the audience they were young men – they tried to wring too much from each phrase.

The two started playing together at the ANU School of Music, where



**TALENTED:** The Australian Guitar Duo, with Jacob Cordover and Rupert Boyd, has a vast repertoire of songs.

they both completed their undergraduate study in 2004. The excellent communication between the duo is no doubt due to these years of playing together.

Still, their individual styles of playing are quite different. Each of them actually played a little like their

respective hairstyles. Boyd's was charismatic and appealing, but in the end a little unruly. In contrast, Jacob's was more restrained, but very precise.

*La Vida Breve* by Manuel de Falla (1876-1946 and Spanish) was a particularly fine example of the players' ensemble skills and benefited from Boyd's lovely rich tone in his mid-range of his instrument. It is also a lovely piece of music.

But two moments, in particular, were the highlights of the evening. The first was one of Australian composer Phillip Houghton's three works performed during the evening – *Wave Radiance*.

It is extremely reminiscent of American minimalist composer Steve Reich's *Electric Counterpoint*, recorded by Pat Metheny in 1987.

This style of composition is beautifully austere, and the duo performed Houghton's version of it entrancingly.

The second stand-out moment was in Nigel Westlake's *Songs from the Forest*, written for the duo's old teachers Tim Kain and John Williams. Westlake uses rhythmic unison and harmonics – a technique which produces a ghostly tone – to fantastic effect.

It was a wonderful moment in the performance by this excellent guitar duo.