

THE AUSTRALIAN

Women on Song for Night of Delight



Shannon Barnett: her sound on trombone was unusually smooth, warm and full...PHOTO CREDIT GERHARD RICHTER

MUSIC

Shannon Barnett Trio, Fetherstone

The Newsagency, Sydney

March 8

Published in The Australian, March 11, 2020

ERIC MYERS

International Women's Day was fittingly celebrated by the Sydney Improvised Music Association (SIMA) on Sunday, presenting two ensembles led by women: Fetherstone, with vocalist Briana Cowlshaw, and the Shannon Barnett Trio.

Fetherstone's entire program consisted of Cowlshaw's esoteric songs, most of which were transparently experimental, all sung by her. Her full-on rock quintet, with Gavin Ahern (keyboards), Jeremy Badcock (electric bass), and Nic Cecire (drums), provided an opportunity for the talented young guitarist Yutaro Okuda to shine.



Fetherstone, L-R, Briana Cowlshaw, Gavin Ahern, Nic Cecire, Jeremy Badcock, Yutaro Okuda: a program consisting entirely of Cowlshaw's esoteric songs...PHOTO CREDIT SAM JAMES PHOTOGRAPHY

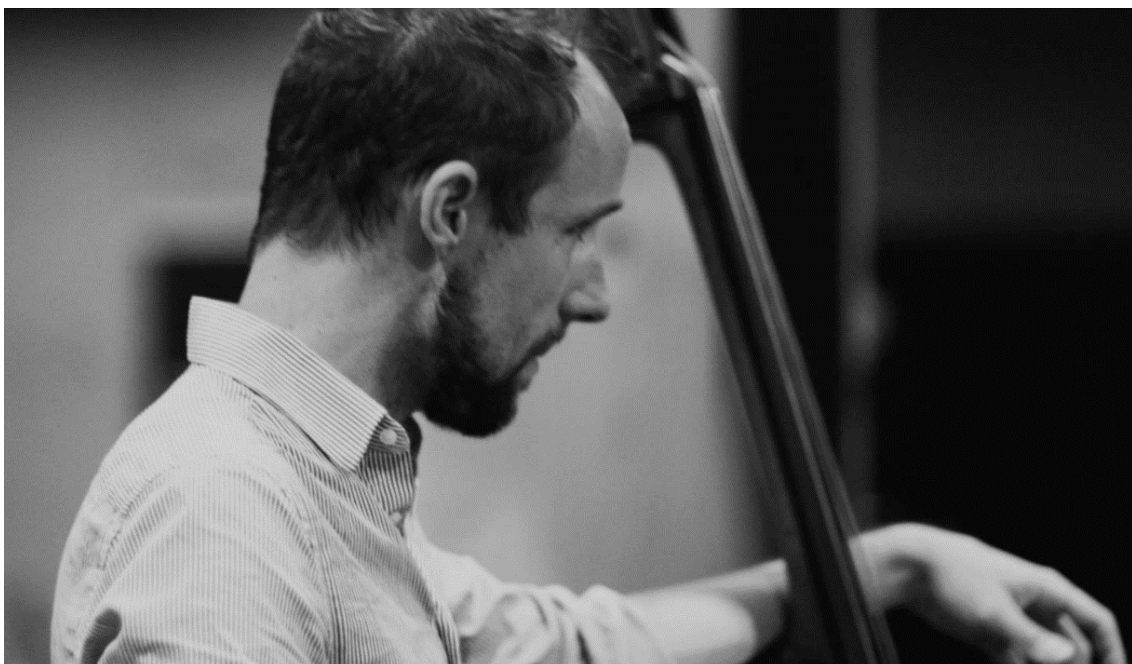
The Trio featured trombonist Barnett, back from Germany where she recently left the famous WRD Big Band in Cologne after six years, and is now freelancing. While she was the nominal leader, this was a true meeting of equals, with compositions from Melbourne musicians Andrea Keller (piano) and Sam Anning (double bass), adding to Barnett's compositions, making up an impressive repertoire of original works.

This presentation by three gifted musicians was an unusually exquisite experience - a faultless exhibition, with many fundamentals in place. The virtuosity of Anning was on display; the time was always magically in the air, given the absence of drums; and empathy between the players was obvious, particularly in the case of Keller and Anning, now one of the great partnerships in Australian jazz.

Their one-hour set, palpably music for the mind, was mesmerising. No sooner had it begun, than suddenly it was over.



Pianist Andrea Keller (above) and bassist Sam Anning (below), now one of the great partnerships in Australian jazz...



Barnett's sound on the trombone was a revelation - unusually smooth, warm and full. Showing a penchant for the plunger mute, to create a very hip distortion in her sound, she was able to produce highly melodic solos which, when necessary, were pleasingly emotional.

Those familiar with Keller's music were gratified to hear versions of two of her compositions *Sleep Cycles* and *Inside Out*, which appear on her recent *Transients* albums. While they were a reminder of her ascendancy as one of Australia's most interesting jazz composers, it is sometimes overlooked that she is also one of the country's most forceful improvisers at the piano. This performance underlined that well-deserved reputation.



*Barnett sang beautifully, suggesting that she should sing more... PHOTO CREDIT
ROGER MITCHELL*

Unexpectedly Barnett sang on two occasions as well: first, in her experimental composition *Mantra II*, during which Keller placed a number of plastic teaspoons on the strings of the grand piano, to create unusual sounds to accompany Barnett's poetic lyrics; and second, in the vocal version of Annings's well-known composition *Sweethearts*, which closed the concert. Barnett sang these tunes beautifully, suggesting she should sing more.