

THE AUSTRALIAN

Ten Part Invention: Gem of a performance honours a jazz treasure



The great drummer and bandleader John Pochée

MUSIC

Ten Part Invention: John Pochée 75th birthday concert

Foundry 616, Sydney

Published in The Australian, September 14, 2015

ERIC MYERS

THE national treasures in Australian jazz are disappearing. Graeme Bell died in 2012, at 97; Bernie McGann, 76, in 2013; Allan Browne, 70, in 2015. Don Burrows, just turned 87, is in a nursing home. Thankfully another treasure, just as significant, the great drummer and bandleader John Pochée, is still with us.

Pochée, who turns 75 this week, is too frail to play the drums himself. But his magnificent band Ten Part Invention (TPI), in its 29th year, soldiers on, with six of

its original personnel now replaced. This rare performance showed that TPI is as strong as ever, and has seldom sounded richer.

The concert opened with *And Zen Monk*, a reminder of the restless intelligence of the late Roger Frampton, whose works underpinned TPI's repertoire until his tragic death in 2000. His more than adequate replacement, the elegant pianist Paul McNamara, was a quiet but still dominant presence throughout the evening.

In replacing the late Bernie McGann, the alto saxophonist Andrew Robson had big shoes to fill. In a woodwind section of virtuosos – alongside Sandy Evans, Matt Ottignon and Paul Cutlan - Robson brought to the music passion, and a prodigious technique tempered by lyricism and good taste. His rendition of Frampton's arrangement of the classic McGann composition *Spirit Song* was one of the night's many highlights.

It is not possible here to acknowledge the plethora of gorgeous writing in the compositions, primarily by Evans and Miroslav Bukovsky, nor the outstanding individual improvisations in the spaces for individual expression, which those compositions provided for.



L-R, James Greening, Miroslav Bukovsky and Warwick Alder: a formidable brass section, still standing tall after 29 years together ...PHOTO CREDIT ROGER MITCHELL

The formidable brass section of trumpeters Bukovsky & Warwick Alder and trombonist James Greening, still standing tall after 29 years together, showed why they have been indispensable in realising Pochée's vision of a "band that would get up on its hind legs and roar".

David Goodman (drums) and the unknown rookie Karl Dunncliff (double bass) anchored the rhythm section like veterans.

TPI's splendid music results from Pochée's giving some of Australia's most promising jazz composers the opportunity to experiment, refine their ideas and develop their own sound. The result has been a corpus of distinctive jazz music full of an indomitable Australian spirit. That repertoire deserves to live on well into the future.

The previous evening, the venue hosted a comparable event: a celebration of the 75th birthday of Pochée's contemporary, pianist and composer Mike Nock, who played with his quartet. I am told the evening was as successful as the Pochée event, well-attended, with warm spirits in the air.

A word on the venue Foundry 616: Its basic aspects are notable – good sightlines, warm atmosphere, excellent food. But significantly the owner, former SIMA boss Peter Rechniewski, has been perceptive enough to realise that if the sound is excellent, then the music has a fighting chance of communicating to the sceptical jazz audience. So, resources have been intelligently allocated to get the sound right. In Sydney it's a rare achievement.

Foundry 616 resembles some of the legendary jazz clubs in Europe, such as Amsterdam's Bimhuis, and Copenhagen's Jazzhouse. With the attention to detail characteristic of those great venues, Rechniewski's club is a tonic in Sydney's musical life.

