

Holly Hofmann on tour

North American flutist Holly Hofmann made no need because Dyne and Sellers filled the role so well. For the Auckland performance, Hofmann and Wofford were accompanied by Jason Orme on drums and Alberto Santorelli on bass.

As is her wont, Hofmann's programme consisted of jazz standards mixed in with a few less well-known tunes from the jazz repertoire. She performed on both concert and alto flute (with bass flute head – a concession, she claimed, to the shortness of her arms!) and her sound on both was warm and exquisitely controlled. Her swinging, relaxed and melodic improvisations were impeccably delivered and audiences were treated to high order jazz playing that, while not paradigm shifting, was executed with exemplary finesse. Hofmann's command of her instrument was abundantly clear in her use of the full range of both flutes, and her solos were coloured with well-controlled glissandi, pitch bends, and occasional over-blown effects. Her sound, particularly on the alto flute, was warm and breathily personal.

The Wellington show was very well attended for a Tuesday evening affair and began with a superbly realized interpretation of John Coltrane's *Dahomey Dance*, re-harmonised and performed with a feel that made it sound as fresh as paint. Pianist Mike Wofford proved a very simpatico accompanist for Hofmann and provided just the right amount of 'push and shove' to propel her improvisations beyond well achieved 'copy-book jazz', to something more personal and compelling. His own playing was absolutely top drawer, and Paul Dyne remarked after the show that Wofford was one of the best pianists he had ever worked with. That became apparent to the audience when Hofmann left the stage during the second set and he performed *You Go To My Head* as a trio piece. Touches like this modulated the programming of the show (sometimes a problem in jazz concerts) and Hofmann's duet with Dyne on Gershwin's *Embraceable You* provided another lovely contrast: it was an intimate conversation between two old friends that the audience was invited to share.

The choice of music was very fine, ranging from a serenely tranquil reading of Cole Porter's *Everything I Love* to a very funky take on Ann Ronell's *Willow Weep For Me*, and included more modern fare like John Scofield's *Groove Elation*. What elevated it above 'just another jazz gig' however, was the care that Hofmann and Wofford had put into the arrangements of the tunes. Even things as hackneyed as *If I Should Lose You* gained a new lustre as a result of their attentions. Mixed with the evident good humour of the musicians on stage, this attention to detail made the concert an excellent introduction to Hofmann's musical sensibilities for those new to her art, and a confirmation of her unquestioned abilities to those already familiar with her music. Holly Hofmann's concert may not have been the hottest show on tour this spring, but it was almost certainly the sweetest.

Norman Meehan