

Phronesis 'the Behemoth' review The Australian 2017

The Behemoth

Phronesis

Following six acclaimed albums, the European piano trio Phronesis has combined with the 14-piece Frankfurt Radio Big Band to record 10 originals commissioned for its 10th anniversary. Although good use is made of the big band, providing colour and richness, there are enough trio passages to satisfy fans of the original Phronesis: pianist Ivo Neame, bassist Jasper Hoiby and Anton Eger on drums. Julian Arguelles arranged and conducted these tracks and provides an up-tempo, driving tenor sax solo in Urban Control, a piece by Eger. Intro to Urban Control begins with solo piano and adds trumpet, bass and drums in a rhythmic uptake. Another Eger composition, Herne Hill, begins with abstract piano phrases, soon joined by the ensemble to continue with strong rhythmic propulsion. Martin Scales contributes several swinging guitar solos, notably in Hoiby's composition Happy Notes, while the infrequently heard bass trumpet plays eloquently in Charm Defensive. Pianist Neame is continuously active in the ensemble — together with bassist Hoiby and Eger on drums — and delivers several smart solos, notably in OK Chorale and Phraternal, where Tony Latkos adds a constructive tenor passage. There is extensive piano work in Hoiby's Untitled #1, plus an elongated guitar sequence, travelling quickly, from Scales. Across its six albums Phronesis has developed a bold and instantly recognisable sound, performing widely across Europe and in many festivals from Morocco to Brazil and from Australia to North America. This new album, with its expanded world of sound, provides a new light on the trio's timeless music, showcasing the extraordinary ability of three superlative musicians.

John McBeath