

*Wellington Youth Orchestra, Conductor – Hamish McKeich, soloists – Louis van der Mespel (double bass), Bianca Andrew (mezzo-soprano), Wellington Town Hall 21 October 2012, Reviewed by Garth Wilshere.*

Under their new director Hamish McKeich the Wellington Youth Orchestra has developed and gone from strength to strength, reaching a new level of performance.

The intensity and appropriateness of the string sound is especially impressive.

It demonstrates too the significance of the younger orchestra in the stable, The Wellington Youth Sinfonietta, (which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year) where many of these young musicians began their playing careers.

Louis van der Mespel began in the Sinfonietta and for this concert performed Wellington-based Thomas Goss's Double Bass Concerto. It is an attractive melodically interesting work that showcases the range and virtues of the instrument, allowing the sonorities and harmonics to shine through. It was played with virtuosity and brilliance by van der Mespel. The supporting string orchestra were great, making for a fine performance.

For Berlioz's *Les nuits d'été* the orchestral sound and balances were ideal and mezzo-soprano Bianca Andrew captured the spirit of each song in a richly nuanced performance. McKeich and the orchestra were supportive and alert to every varying note and tone.

The Brahms Symphony No. 4, was an astonishingly good performance, ideally managed by McKeich, and certainly one of the best I have ever heard by a youth orchestra, mature, knowing playing, from the rich sweeping strings through to piquant winds and gleaming brass.