

the Strad

ESSENTIAL READING FOR THE STRING MUSIC WORLD SINCE 1890

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PUBLIQuartet, Gregg Kallor

By Bruce Hodges

‘Mind the gap’ means one thing to UK audiences but to the PUBLIQuartet it refers to bridging the divide ‘between diverse musical genres through group improvisation.’ In this fascinating evening, the ensemble began with a tingling version of Stravinsky’s *Three Pieces* for string quartet, later combining it with three Thelonious Monk standards to create *Epistrophe* (2014). And Debussy’s String Quartet – first played warmly in full, if a tad for a freewheeling blend of chromaticism and pizzicato, with a dash of Stephane Grappelli.

In between came Villa-Lobos’s *Bachiana brasileira* No. 5 in an engaging, pizzicato-laced transcription by Jannina Norpoth, one of the group’s violinists – so natural-sounding that it could have been the composer’s original version. Composer-pianist Gregg Kallor joined the quartet for ‘Found’, a serene movement from *A Single Noon*, his suite originally written for piano.

Completing the ensemble are Curtis Stewart (violin), Rick Revel (viola), and Amanda Gookin (cello). Throughout the night the musicians exuded a sense of easy-going friendliness, hospitality and enthusiasm. Some well-intentioned spoken introductions to the pieces perhaps exceeded their welcome, but once the music began, the group’s ingenious hybrids made one forget about anything else.