

Elegant and outrageous in a classy concert

Those Girls", as the three musicians were billed, performed a smooth and varied program that encompassed repertoire spanning four centuries. They clearly enjoyed themselves and entertained the capacity audience enormously.

Opening the concert were two duets by George Frideric Handel, arranged by Brahms: *Quel fior ch'all alba ride* and *Ahi, nella sortie umane*. Ellis and Owens's voices blended well, the balance was good and the harmonies produced some spine-tingling suspensions.

Deutscher Volkslieder Wo033 by Johannes Brahms was an impressive solo performance by Susan Ellis. I particularly enjoyed the warmth of tone in *Da untem im Tale*, and the complexity of the melody in *In Stiller Nacht*. Lee's interpretation of Schubert's *Impromptu Op. 90 No 2* provided a

Don't Forget YourLippy!

Art Song Canberra. Susan Ellis and Sarahlouise Owens, Sopranos and Jee Youn Lee, Piano.
Sunday, October 17, Wesley Music Centre.

Reviewer: **Jennifer Gall**

striking contrast to the songs she accompanied so effectively throughout the rest of the performance and showcased her distinctive touch and particular approach to *rubato* in this piece. The first hint of the ensemble's penchant for theatrical excess came in the highly entertaining delivery of *Walpurgisnacht*. Owens produced an alarmingly good transformation from concerned mother to broom-riding witch in the course of the song and the two singers' conversational interplay complemented each other beautifully. Particularly pleasing were the selection of Franz Schreker



Sarahlouise Owens, Jee Youn Lee and Susan Ellis star in *Don't Forget Your Lippy!*

songs sung by Owens, especially *Frühling* and the powerful performance of *Lenzzauber*.

Songs from the Movies followed after the interval and at the risk of

being a spoilsport, I think that these numbers would have worked better without the theatrical script linking them. The costume changes were fun and would have conveyed the essence of the bracket without the need to link the songs with a narrative that sounded a little too contrived. The rapport between the women was sufficiently strong to sustain the connection between the subjects in each of the songs and to engage and amuse the audience without superfluous conversations.

The final number certainly completed the afternoon's musical journey from the elegant Handel duets to the outrageous song *Two Women Doing It* written especially for the ensemble by Peter Casey. Classy as their classical turns and trills were, I suspect that the call of cabaret may yet lure "Those Girls" into future vocal mischief to delight other audiences.