



# The West Australian

Date: Friday, 25 February 2005  
Page Number: 17  
Edition: First  
Supplement: Today

Market: Metro WA  
Circulation: 205,362  
Published: MON TO SAT  
Editorial: [email the editor](mailto:email_the_editor)  
Item No: P5129591

Size: 130.66 sq. cm.

## Scintillating strings

### CONCERT

**Turtle Island String Quartet**  
**Sunken Garden, UWA**  
**Review: Emily Lyons**

These guys might combine in the conventional chamber music format but they can swing and groove to bebop, funk, Afro-Cuban, bluegrass, salsa and even classical Indian rhythms.

And if cellist nonpareil Yo-Yo Ma can say that theirs is “some of the most creative music-making today”, you get an idea of their brilliance.

The quartet can also improvise, compose and arrange music, more akin to the situation 200 years ago, when Haydn was in the middle of creating the string quartet form.

The effect is terrific and each member is given the chance to stretch out a solo spot (similar to the cadenza in a classical piece) or demonstrate “free” improvisation together, resulting in a living, creative entity.

It’s an entity that took us through the likes of Charles Mingus, Miles Davis, Oliver Nelson, Billie Holiday and many of the group’s own compositions.

Julie-O, an original by cellist Mark Summer, was the only complete solo of the evening and showcased his vivacious imagination and the verve and richness of his cello and cello/percussion playing.

In addition to founder and first violinist David Balakrishnan’s own compositions, we heard the rich violin (and wry humour) of Evan Price and his composition Variations on an Unoriginal

Theme (actually highly original), and the beautiful viola sounds of Mads Tolling — also a member of the famed Stanley Clark band.

I can’t remember the last time I heard a viola being played so gorgeously.

They finished their set with a fantastic Latin treatment of the jazz standard On Green Dolphin Street. It began with feather-like pizzicato pluckings and finished with sinus-clearing slices by the violins.

Perfect summer’s night, good venue, great band. The collective impact of the Turtle Island String Quartet is greater than the sum of their remarkable personal gifts. And if their pizzicato weren’t always together (not helped by the transparency of microphone hook-up), we forgave them.