

music

Magical strings

World-renowned musicians perform in Nassau

By FELICITY INGRAHAM

The Nassau Music Society brought in the new year with a stunning performance of classical music from world-class artists, who flew in to participate in a two-day concert event.

Violinist Ambra Albek and the string quartet Quartetto Di Cremona performed for a packed audience at St Paul's Anglican Church, Lyford Cay on Sunday, January 22, where they received a standing ovation. They entertained a smaller crowd at St Andrew's Presbyterian Kirk the day before. The musicians also led a master class that exposed music students to a unique learning experience.

Simone Fitzcharles, president of the Nassau Music Society, said the organisation is gearing up for a great variety of concerts and master classes for a fun-filled season filled with visits from world-renowned artists.

With a mandate of "Bringing the world of music to the Bahamas", the Society consists of music lovers who work behind the scenes to make these concerts and free master classes run smoothly.

Ambra Albek is a violinist and a violist who holds a Master's degree with distinction in piano chamber music and a concert diploma with top marks, having studied in Italy and Switzerland.

Together with her twin sister Fiona, she formed the Albek Duo, until Fiona's recent tragic death. During their international concert career, the sisters participated in numerous festivals throughout Europe, the United States, South America, Australia and China.

They performed both as a duo and in other chamber music formations, as



Violinist Alba Albek performs with the Quartetto Di Cremona in Nassau last weekend

well as playing solo with orchestra accompaniment.

During the final performance on Sunday night at St Paul's Anglican Church, Ambra and the Quartetto Di Cremona presented a piece they collaborated on in memory of Fiona and her exuberant and passionate personality. The performance garnered a rousing standing ovation.

Several prominent composers wrote expressly for the Albek Duo, including Italian composer Alessandro Luccheti ('Fantasies' on themes from famous operas), and the well-known American composer William Perry ('Gemini Concerto: An Entertainment for Violin, Piano and Orchestra').

Alba was well-matched on stage last weekend by the Quartetto Di Cremona.

Internationally renowned for their "extremely mature and lyrical sound", the Italian string quartet is described by the British magazine *The Strad* as a group that has a focus and intensity that brings life to music, from the "tight blend and immaculate voicing" of their Brahms, to the "sleek and elegant"

dynamic contouring of their Mozart.

The Quartetto Di Cremona formed in 2000 at the Stauffer Academy in Cremona, Italy, and continued as they studied with Hatto Beyerle, a noted chamber music professor.

The group comprises: Cristiano Gualco on violin, Paolo Andreoli violin, Simone Gramaglia also on viola, and Giovanni Scaglioni on cello. They have played to critical acclaim at the most important venues and festivals in Europe, including at the Beethoven Haus and Beethoven Bonn, Konzerthaus (Berlin), Klara Festival (Brussels) Moving on Music Festival (Northern Ireland) and many others. They have also performed extensively in the US as well as Australia, including at the popular Perth International Art Festival.

Saturday's performance featured Schubert's Quartet Death and the Maiden, and Beethoven's String Quartet op 29. Sunday's performances included F Mendelssohn Capriccio's op 81, Mozart's K465, and Brahms' String Quartet op 111.

Nassau Music Society President Ms

Fitzcharles brought New Year's wishes and updated the public on the Society's achievements, keeping their fervent promise to promote and encourage the art of music in the Bahamas.

"We are proud to note that we have thus far fulfilled more than 50 per cent of our \$80,000 pledge to provide scholarships to outstanding music students at the College of the Bahamas," she said. "The goal is also one of simultaneously uplifting our youth and helping to bring their dreams into reality."

Next up on the schedule of events are the award-winning Petar Jankovic and Daniel Duarte, known as the Guitar Duo. They will perform two concerts in Nassau starting February 24.

Ambra Albek and the Quartetto Di Cremona's landmark performance in the Bahamas was held under the patronage of Governor General Dame Marguerite Pindling. Sponsors included Colina Insurance Limited, Pictet Bank, Lennox Patton, RoyalStar Assurance, the Mall at Marathon, Atlantis, RBC Royal Bank, and Classical 98.1 FM.