

MUSIC

Brogue Quartet multi-tasks musically

Lively Halifax-based group showcases wide range of instruments

LILY MACKIE
Arts & Culture Reporter

Four of Atlantic Canada's finest saxophonists performed a varied selection of exciting repertoire at Mount Allison which demonstrated their motto: "because toes are for tapping."

Based in Halifax, N.S., the group fuses a range of styles, drawing from the backgrounds of its four members to create an ensemble that is lively, engaging, cohesive and dynamic. Formed in 2013, group consists of James Kalyn (soprano), Tristan De Borba (alto), Brad Reid (tenor) and Dawn Hatfield (baritone).

The Brogue Quartet prepared a repertoire of what they called "crossover" selections, which consisted of a variety of genres and respective composers. The group selected pieces which emphasized the players' whimsical natures with

unusual tones and rhythms. At certain moments, the performance became sweet and moving, while still remaining edgy and animated. The program included suites by Bob Mintzer, Gordon Goodwin, David Kechley and even a piece by Saturday Night Live's Lennie Pickett. Original arrangements by Kalyn and Reid were also featured, as well as a few surprise moments of audience participation.

One truly entertaining and unique aspect of the show came from the group's comic stage presence. Their cheerful tunes were punctuated by casual banter between the performers. The audience's excitement quickly and visibly increased over the course of the evening, as each demonstrated masterful skill with a wide variety of instruments including clarinets, bass clarinets, flutes, bassoons, guitars, violins, wooden spoons and shakers (which Kalyn comically strapped to his feet in order to continue using his hands.)

However, most impressive was watching the four musicians undergo rapid instrument changes, even multiple times over the course of one piece. Often mounting multiple instruments around the neck, each musician skillfully played an instrument with one hand, while reaching for another instrument with the other. There were times when the stage was alive with activity as the musicians continually alternated between the wide selection spread out before them. Indeed, it was difficult to keep track of how many times instruments changed hands.

Many laughs and cheers permeated the evening which, despite its varied musical selections, flowed seamlessly. Throughout the show, each musician demonstrated their individual talents, which were considerable to say the least.

The Brogue Quartet is a newcomer to the Maritime music scene. However, playing at Mount Allison

must have seemed a bit like returning home for most of the performers. Kalyn is a professor of single reeds and a conductor at Mount Allison University; Tristan, who is on faculty at Acadia University, has given masterclasses at Mount Allison University; and Catherine is an alumna of the Mount Allison University Music Program. Although exempt from the Mount Allison "club," Reid studied jazz saxophone at St. Francis University, and is surely familiar with the local communities and music scene.

The Brogue Quartet's concert at Mt. A took place on Feb. 10. The quartet launched its five-concert tour in Truro, N.S. early this February, with following performances in Antigonish N.S., Wolfville N.S. and Halifax.