

# On the road in gypsy spirits

Simon Tedeschi and Ian Cooper's musical mix satisfies many tastes in its blend, **Ron Banks** writes

**T**he still very youthful pianist Simon Tedeschi has already earned an impressive reputation as a classical musician. He began his concert career at the age of 15 and now at 28 is a seasoned performer of the classical concerto.

But Tedeschi has a restless, inquiring spirit and in the past couple of years has found himself in the company of Sydney violinist Ian Cooper, who introduced him to gypsy jazz.

The pair recorded an album of jazz tunes together soon after teaming up, and this year they have broadened their jazz palette with the recording of their second album *Quintet*, featuring musicians from James Morrison's band. Cooper is also a regular with Morrison, so it is no surprise that the jazz virtuoso makes a guest appearance on the album, nor that *Quintet* was recorded in Morrison's own Sydney studio.

With the launch of the album in September, Tedeschi and Cooper are undertaking a series of promotional concerts on the east coast to introduce audiences to this exercise in jazz meets classical. The brief tour reaches Canberra on October 8.

Tedeschi recently returned to Sydney from Boston, where he has been based for past two years. He says it is the ideal spot for taking lessons from experienced musical teachers, and for expanding his



Simon Tedeschi and Ian Cooper will perform music from their new album *Quintet* at the Southern Cross Club in Woden on October 8.

own career in the United States.

Tedeschi confesses to a love of jazz that began to blossom even as he was refining his classical technique, and at the moment jazz is taking up quite a lot of his time.

"Over the past six months I've probably been playing far more jazz than classical," he says.

"But that may change,

depending on circumstances. Next year, for example, I might find myself back playing more concerti than jazz tunes."

For Cooper on *Quintet*, violin jazz in the style of Stephane Grappelli has been very much part of his career since he began gigging in jazz bands as a teenager after training in classical violin.

In fact, listen to *Tchavolo Swing*, the first track on the album with Tedeschi and you would swear that Cooper is channelling the great French violinist who was still performing at the age of 91. "I've played a lot of music in pubs and jazz clubs, and this kind of gypsy jazz really gets audiences in the mood," says Cooper, who

confesses to being a big fan of Grappelli.

He once had the pleasure, he says, of playing the violin while Grappelli accompanied him on piano. "I don't think people realise just how fantastic he was as a musician," Cooper says. "Grappelli's piano playing was just as awesome as his violin talent."

Tedeschi and Cooper might open their album with a swinging jazz number, but their intention is to offer music that is broader in scope, and draws deeply on the pair's ability to combine classical knowledge with jazz arrangements.

There is homage to Bach in their redefining of the jazz standard *All the Things You Are* and a Latin-inspired reworking of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*. Jazz classics such as *Round Midnight*, *Body and Soul* and Miles Davis's *Walkin'* are also unpacked and put together for piano, violin and jazz band in a style that stretches all the musicians' talents.

There is even a new take on such oldies as *Tea for Two* and *It Had to Be You*. "This album is really an offshoot of our previous effort as a duo," Tedeschi says.

"We wanted to take our music partnership much further, and this one, I think, reflects our personalities much better.

"In some cases we've done a classical treatment of a jazz tune, while normally it's the classics that get the jazz treatment.

"So we think we've pulled it off backwards."

■ Tedeschi and Cooper will perform music from *Quintet* in a duo setting at the Southern Cross Club in Woden on October 8 at 8.30pm. Tickets on 6283 7288.

## Strike up the band

**I**f composer Elliott Carter proves anything, it's that youth is in the ear of the beholder. The American, known as a "composer's composer", wrote his first piece for a percussion ensemble to coincide with his 100th birthday last year.

This week Canberra audiences will be able to hear the work - called *Tintinnabulation*, a word that describes the ringing sound of bells.

Proving that age and experience don't exclude vigour and passion, the piece will be performed by the DRUMatix Alumni Ensemble, made up of graduates of the percussion program at the ANU School of Music led by Gary France. Students and staff from the School of Music will also take to the stage to perform a collection of percussion-centred

music spanning 80 years, from the early 20th century to the present day. Another highlight will be the Australian premiere of the piece *Imaginary Landscape* by composer John Cage.

France says, "We'll be hitting everything from nipple gongs to tin cans, odd pieces of metal and an amplified metal coil, as well as more traditional instruments. We'll also be performing the *Concerto for Violin and Percussion Orchestra* by Lou Harrison, which will show how melodic and percussive instruments can work together to make music that sounds as fresh today as it did 50 years ago."

■ Friday at 7.30pm, Saturday at 1pm, ANU Arts Centre, Union Court.

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**THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE (PG)**  
Wed 10:15am, 3:10pm, 7:20pm  
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**THE SOLOIST (M)**  
Wed 12:10pm, 2:20pm, 7:10pm

**THE YOUNG VICTORIA (PG)**  
Wed 2:00pm, 5:10pm, 7:20pm  
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**THE SOLOIST (M)** Wed 6:30pm

**THE YOUNG VICTORIA (PG)** Wed 10:30am  
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