

WOMAD 2020

WOMAD is a pretty special weekend of music and dance, but it was a golden opportunity when I had the chance to be the artist liaison person for Catrin Finch and Seckou Keita. They are both super down to earth, real people – no airs and graces, or egos attached.

They had come from WOMADelaide in Australia, and were travelling with their families, and their manager and his wife. Meeting for the first time at an event on the Wednesday night before WOMAD, I asked Catrin if there was anything they particularly wanted to see or do while they were in Taranaki 'buy All Blacks rugby jerseys' was the answer! So we did. We also introduced the family to pineapple lumps, jet planes, Eskimo lollies, peanut slabs and Kiwi humour!

Not surprisingly, Catrin doesn't travel overseas with her own harp – so the Auckland Philharmonic Orchestra harp was delivered to New Plymouth for her use – though it did have some stipulations which meant it couldn't be used for the workshop/chat on a minor stage. This was a shame as it was an amazing opportunity for the audience to get up close and see the instruments, and ask the artists specific instrument questions.

The Friday concert was held at the Dell stage – with the water off to the right and under the shade of the big trees, it was an atmospheric and intimate evening concert. Saturday saw Catrin and Seckou performing on the large Gables stage, but their presence was just as intimate as their rapport and love of music was tangible for the audience. The fusion of world, contemporary and classical music is seamless, with plenty of humour added to the mix. Catrin and Seckou have a wealth of musical experience between them, and a very open relationship about how they might find a mutual play ground for their music. The result is a very tight and focussed performance to full houses of intrepid listeners.

Their CDS are available online, and while you won't get to see the online rapport, you can still hear the fun they are having chasing mosquitos between the two instruments and trying to do one better than each other in a play off around a section of the Goldberg variations! Must see performers – if you don't get to see them – have a listen online!!

