

**Programme Note for *Jade Flower Song*
*World Premiere***

Jade Flower Song began its life as an invitation last year from bassoonist Professor Kim Walker to compose a short work for shakuhachi, flute, bassoon and harp specifically for today's concert. How could I resist such a delicate and alluring combination of instruments?

The musical inspiration came in the form of a series of wonderful photographs taken by my sister Helen of the exquisitely beautiful jade flower (*strongylodon macrobotrys*) she found growing in the garden of artist friends living on Queensland's Sunshine Coast. Growing on a vine, the bluish green claw shaped flowers develop in hanging clusters of up to 5 ft in length. Intense shades of aqua and blue, the flowers have an almost artificial appearance and amazing inflorescence magically captured in my sister's photographs. The native habitat of the Jade vine is the tropical rain forest of the Philippines.

My composition *Jade Flower Song* celebrates this remarkable flower in music drawing exclusively upon the Japanese *hyojoshi* mode – spelled in this work as the notes A D E F and B flat - another way of deriving this scale could be from the musical notes found in the name of the flower itself (jADE FlowEr) and my own initials (AEB) – remembering that in German 'B' equals the note B flat (as made use of most famously by JS Bach). These correspondences may be co-incidental but as it happens this semester, I have been teaching Bach to my students in the Arts-Music Unit of the Conservatorium.

Jade Flower Song is in 4 sections. The piece begins with a series of calls off-stage followed by a gentle procession. When the players are seated on stage they politely introduce themselves to each other in solo passages before joining together in an increasingly lively and joyful dance in three sections. Between the penultimate and final section, the harp falls to its lowest ebb as though exhausted and one literally feels the slowing of a heartbeat to the accompaniment of gentle wind chimes. The shakuhachi re-enters, recalling the calls of the opening and providing a link into the final dance section. This is propelled by the harp's increasingly lively ostinato as the music rushes to its conclusion.

All my recent music honours the Earth. For as the medieval Christian mystic abbess Hildegard of Bingen reminds us so wonderfully: "The Earth is the Mother of All for contained in Her are the seeds of All." Melbourne based Jungian literary scholar David Tacey in his book *Edge of the Sacred* (Harper Collins, 1998) says the true language of Australia is 'Earth language'. If we rotate the letters of EARTH just once we have HEART. In this sense this music might be said to represent Love and in this spirit it is dedicated to my sister Helen.

AB
27.09.06