

## Composer Notes

### "Whales, Waves & the Ocean" 2008.

I composed at the time when whaling in the Southern Australian waters by the Japanese was a politically dramatic and controversial issue. Great drama took place on the ocean between Australia and the Japanese at the site of the Japanese whaling activity.

Such events stimulated me into action.

Previously in 1998 I experienced whale watching by boat, during a visit to Hervey Bay - North Queensland. Here I saw at close range Humpback whales and their calves, in the protection of the bay. During that time I considered the cello to be the most suitable orchestral instrument to represent whales, for a future musical composition.

In "Whales, Waves & the Ocean" I have endeavoured to capture in sound the breaching and the swimming movements of the whales, as they glide throughout the rolling waves in the deep oceanic seas.

In the bay, these huge awesome yet friendly and inquisitive creatures would swim up to our boat; spray water through their blowholes or breathing valve; circle the boat; dive under the boat, communicating by singing vocally deep hollow and high intoning sounds. These sounds seemed to reverberate and echo through the water sound waves. The Humpback has a wide frequency range, and can produce many sounds. The whales as they came close to the boat would eye-ball us, as another method of communication. They were so friendly and gentle. It was a fantastic experience!

From the outset, the cello represents the various physical swimming actions of the whales as breaching, gliding, rolling. Although the work is set in E minor, I have included a variety of modulations and harmonic colourings. These add to the evocative nature of this descriptive music.

The contrasting Allegro con energia introduces a playfulness, first by the piano in A minor, followed by the cello. There is much chromaticism here in this section. The music is suggestive of the dolphins. Many dolphins were swimming with the whales. These dolphins actively played around the whales by leaping through the air, diving at a fast speed and skimming over and through the water. They were having such fun!

When the whale theme returns it is further developed musically. Here the intermittent *pp* *lontano* piano adds a spaciousness and distance dimensions to the music. Eventually the opening figure returns bringing the work to its end.

In general, the piano's role is kept to high pitched chords which include at times chromatic harmony. This complements in style, the low freely flowing cello part. So, I have endeavoured to capture in sound my Hervey Bay experience.