

Incantations
for wind quintet (1985, revised 2006)

Ross Edwards

In the 1980s I completed a series of compositions which bear the generic title *maninya*, a nonsense word later defined as 'Australian dance-chant'. The best known of these works is my violin concerto *Maninyas* (1988). Characteristics of the so called *maninya* style include a chant-like quality resulting from the subtly varied repetition of material within a narrow range of limitations, drone-centered harmonies and generally lively tempi.

The evolution of this *maninya* style may have been influenced by my sub-conscious absorption of a variety of non-western musics. African mbira music, for example, may be responsible to some extent for the characteristic terseness and angularity of the melodic shapes, while the manner in which these are woven together sometimes recalls the textures of Indonesian gamelan music. Some listeners have detected fleeting references to Japanese, Indian and Indonesian scales; others have considered the repetitive processes to be similar to those used to induce heightened awareness in much of the world's functional religious music, e.g., Australian Aboriginal chant and Sufic ritual music.

Far more important an influence than any music, however, has been the natural environment, a timeless continuum from which much of the structural material was distilled. I've found the ecstatic and mysterious sound-tapestry of the insect chorus in the heat of the Australian summer to be a particularly fertile source of inspiration, and this is reflected in the quirky periodicity of much of my music. Although its presence is more abstract in *Incantations*, it remains the supreme generative force behind everything I write.

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