

Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra (in one movement)

Composed especially for and dedicated to his friend, the wonderfully gifted oboist Diana Doherty, Ross Edwards has sought, in his *Oboe Concerto*, to imbue the traditional concerto with elements of theatre, ritual and dance, whilst preserving its concert hall function as an accompanied soloistic display.

As we have come to expect from this composer, the texture is dominated by an almost kaleidoscopic interplay of material gleaned from the natural environment and diverse cultural sources, whose symbolic meaning remains ultimately and tantalisingly elusive. There are, however, audible references to other Edwards works, notably *Dawn Mantras* and *Symphony No. 2 (Earth Spirit Songs)*, whose common theme is renewal.

Although it is unlikely that the composer was conscious of a program or narrative, a hidden purport might suggest a lone voice crying in the wilderness, led through various stages of socialisation before re-emerging, transformed into a joyful affirmation of unity embracing diversity.

Thus, an opening 'wild bird' soliloquy is arrested by what sound like phrases from a Lutheran chorale before embarking on a rhapsodic melodic journey, unified by drones, ritornelli and episodes of canonic variation. This melodic unfolding, with its fleeting references to birdsong, plainsong, Hebrew cantillation, scales from South-east Asia and rhythmic counterpoint inspired by the sound patterns of insects and frogs, culminates in a love duet between the solo oboe and cor anglais.

Finally, the opening 'wild bird' motif returns and is ritualised, along with other previous material, into patterns characteristic of Edwards' maninya (Australian dance-chant) form as a seething, celebratory finale.

Ross Edwards' *Oboe Concerto* was commissioned for Diana Doherty and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra by Andrew and Renata Kaldor. The world première was given in the Sydney Opera House on August 4 2002. Diana Doherty was the soloist with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra conducted by Lorin Maazel.

Fred Watson

My *Oboe Concerto* was especially created for Diana Doherty who was soloist in the first performance by Lorin Maazel and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. For this occasion I sketched the following scenario as a context for Diana's highly developed kinesic qualities as a performer. It is emphasised, however, that this theatrical dimension was an afterthought and the piece was designed in the first place for standard concert presentation.

Orchestra tunes. Conductor enters, acknowledges applause and turns to face orchestra. An atmosphere of expectation. Hall and platform lights fade rapidly to darkness over several seconds leaving a pool of light where the soloist would be expected to stand.

The soloist begins the performance offstage in darkness. The lights on the orchestra's music stands fade up before fig.1 and when the glockenspiel sounds in the following measure, the soloist steps, bird-like, beak (oboe) upraised, into the spotlight area.

From here the platform lights begin to fade up. By ms.41, the platform is suffused with dim, mysterious light, the conductor spotlighted.

After fig.5, the soloist turns and walks to join the woodwind ensemble on a podium beside the cor anglais. The lighting gradually becomes brighter, whiter - an optimistic dawn - darkening at fig.8. By fig.10 it has become pale, intimate and mysterious. Still intimate at fig.16, but gorgeously rose-tinted, fading to darkness at ms.186.

At fig.20, lights begin to come up as soloist returns to front platform, a defined area where free movement can take place. The soloist and conductor vividly lit; the orchestra in semi-darkness. Abrupt blackout to synchronize with final chord. Lights come back up a few seconds later.

Ross Edwards

Duration: c.18 mins