Ross Edwards (b.1943)

One of Australia’s best-known composers, Ross Edwards’ distinctive sound world combines shapes and patterns from nature with a variety of musical influences which reflect and celebrate Australia’s cultural diversity.

In his maninya (dance/chant) pieces he has tried to restore to ‘serious’ music such qualities as lightness, spontaneity and the impulse to dance. His belief in the healing power of music is reflected in a series of profoundly contemplative works influenced by birdsong and the mysterious polyphony of summer insects.

His compositions include four symphonies, the violin concerto Maninyas and the internationally acclaimed Dawn Mantras, which ushered in the new millennium from the sails of the Sydney Opera House. Scores and recordings can be purchased from the Australian Music Centre, info@amcoz.com.au

For more information, see the Ross Edwards Web Site: www.rossedwards.com

Raft Song at Sunrise (1995)
for solo shakuhachi

Although this was my first attempt to write for the shakuhachi, an end-blown Japanese bamboo flute, people had been observing for years that the phraseology of some of my more quiescent works, notably The Tower of Remoteness (1978) for clarinet and piano, recalls the traditional shakuhachi repertoire of meditational pieces (honkyoku). This similarity wasn’t consciously intended but perhaps it’s not surprising: I’d come to regard my own works as musical contemplation objects and my source of inspiration was was the timeless and mysterious sound world produced by insects. Raft Song at Sunrise takes advantage of the astonishingly expressive qualities of the shakuhachi to introduce a human voice into this sound world. It was composed especially for Riley Lee to perform during the exhibition of Ross Mellick’s bamboo construction Raft No. 3 at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in January 1996. Later that year Riley was to make an important contribution to my music for Bruce Beresford’s feature film Paradise Road.

R.E.