

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 three 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.

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

Symphony No.1 (*Da Pacem Domine*) (1991)

Conceived and partly composed during the Gulf Crisis, the tone of the *Symphony Da Pacem Domine* is unrelentingly sombre. As I worked on the score I began to think of it as a threnody for the gravely ill Stuart Challender, then Chief Conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, who died shortly after its completion and to whom it is dedicated.

A large, monolithic single movement, the Symphony evolves slowly and organically over a deep, insistent rhythmic pulse. It is thus, in effect, a sort of massive orchestral chant of quiet intensity into which my subjective feelings of grief and foreboding about some of the great threats to humanity: war, pestilence and environmental devastation, have been subsumed into the broader context of ritual. And although it is manifestly more architectonic than some of my other 'contemplative' music, the Symphony is designed to create a sense of timelessness associated with certain Oriental and Mediaeval Western musical genres. A hymn-like episode based on a fragment of the plainsong *Da Pacem Domine* (Give Peace, Lord) gives the work its title.

Symphony Da Pacem Domine was commissioned by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation with assistance from the Australia Council. The first performance was given in August 1992 by the West Australian Symphony conducted by Jorge Mester.

R.E.