

COMPOSER'S NOTE

When the A.B.C. commissioned me this year to write a new orchestral work, my initial idea was to write the second piece of a projected Mangrove series. I found, however, that my thoughts were more concerned with Australia as a whole than with particular parts of it. For instance, whenever I have returned from abroad in recent years, this country has seemed to me to be one of the last places on earth where one could honestly write quick and joyous music. I decided, therefore, to write such a piece.

Reflecting upon this, it soon became clear that it would be dishonest of me to write music that is altogether quick and joyous. The lack of a common cause and the self-interest of many have drained us of much of our energy. A bogus national identity and its commercialization have obscured the true breadth of our culture. Most of the jubilation, I came to feel, awaits us in the future. Perhaps we now need to attune ourselves to this continent, to listen to the cry of the earth, as the Aborigines have done for many thousands of years.

Earth Cry is a straightforward and melodious work. Its four parts are made up of a quick ritualistic music framed by slower music of a supplicatory nature, and an extended coda. It owes a debt to a setting of Aranda poetry, The Song of Tailitnama, that I completed in 1974.

While the music of Earth Cry is very much in my own personal idiom, the treatment of the orchestra represents a new departure. This is particularly noticeable in the way that instruments are doubled. First and second violins, for instance, sing in unison for most of the work; and lower strings often sing with the lower brass. I have done this in order to summon up broader feelings and a broader landscape.

P.S.