

# *Rainsong*

## **Roland Robinson (1912 – 1992)**

Born in Ireland of English parents, Roland Robinson was nine years old when he first came to Australia. At 14 he was already working on a sheep station in outback NSW, first as a houseboy and then as a rouseabout and boundary rider. Later in his working life he was a horse-trainer, jockey, fencer, dam-builder, factory worker, railway fitter, cleaner, art school model, member of a ballet company, gardener, helped catch crocodiles and snakes for a menagerie, and in his last job was the green-keeper of a golfcourse in Sydney. During WW2 as a conscientious objector, he had to labour on railway lines in the Northern Territory.

Intensely attracted by the Australian landscape and the bushman's ethos, always a radical, Robinson joined whole-heartedly in the Jindyworobak programme from its beginning – to write from the uniqueness of the Australian environment, and to incorporate Aboriginal culture. Robinson wrote eight small volumes of poetry, five prose works on Aboriginal myths and legends, a book of stories about the relationships of Aborigines and whites and three volumes of auto-biography.

*(from Australian Poetry in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Ed. Gray & Lehmann – “Minerva”)*

- ***The text for “Rainsong” is taken from Robinson’s poem, “Northern Oriole” and I have tried to evoke that “lushness” and atmosphere after a rainstorm; when the air is cleared, leaves drip and birds call out!***

***The work was commissioned by Adrian Walter and was first performed at the 1999 Darwin International Guitar Festival in the Charles Darwin University Theatre.***

***Richard Charlton  
Vaucluse 26/4/ 99***

***The text of Roland Robinson’s poem “Northern Oriole” is used  
by kind permission of “HarperCollins” Publishers, Australia.***