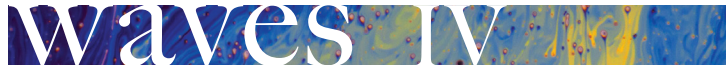


waves IV

halcyon



Halcyon's fourth self-released EP, *Waves IV*, features significant contemporary works for voice by three distinctive Australian composers: Larry Sitsky, Ross Edwards and Matthew Hindson. Though different in style and timbre, they share a common theme - humans drawn to contemplation by nature.

1-2 Matthew Hindson *Insect Songs*

I. Ants in the Shower Recess 3:38 II. Cicadas at Night 6:53

Jenny Duck-Chong *mezzo-soprano* Vladimir Gorbach *guitar*

3-9 Larry Sitsky *A Feast of Lanterns II: Seven songs from Chinese poetry*

*III. Bitter Cold 1:46 IV. The Ghost Road 2:22
V. Autumn Thoughts 2:21 VI. Along the Stream 2:16
VII. Freezing Night 1:39 VIII. Feast of Lanterns 1:16
IX. Song of the Night 3:07*

Luke Spicer *conductor* Jenny Duck-Chong *mezzo-soprano* Vivien Jeffery *violin/viola*
Geoffrey Gartner *cello* Clemens Leske *piano* William Jackson *percussion*

10-14 Ross Edwards *Five Senses: Five poems of Judith Wright*

*X. Song 2:16 XI. To a Child 3:10 XII. The Lost Man 6:23
XIII. The Forest 3:25 XIV. Five Senses 1:20*

Jenny Duck-Chong *mezzo-soprano* Bernadette Harvey *piano* Joshua Hill *percussion*

composer notes

Insect Songs (1998) – Matthew Hindson

Insects have been a fertile source of inspiration to some Australian composers, in particular Ross Edwards who has used the patterns of insect sounds within his compositions.

The two Insect Songs take as their basis separate poems by Australian poets as their starting points.

The first movement, “Ants in the Shower Recess” (poem by Jamie Grant), takes many cues from the text on which it is based. Ants are described as “tiny, black-skinned warriors” who seem to be indestructible. Indeed, the point of the poem is that ants will be around much longer than the poet (or the composer).

The second song, “Cicadas at Night” (poem by Peter Skryznecki), parallels the life cycle of a cicada, emerging from their seven year stage as a wriggling, squirming pupae to spend their brief above-ground life singing and reproducing.

Both song-settings utilize aspects of word painting, especially with the guitar writing. The sounds of scurrying ants and incessant cicadas are portrayed throughout the relevant songs. They are dominantly lyrical works, though rhythmically quite challenging for the performers.

Insect Songs were commissioned by Jeannie Marsh and Ken Murray, with financial assistance from the Australia Council for the Arts in 1998. I still find these songs moving and appealing all these years later, especially thanks to this lively and engaging performance by Jenny and Vlad. They are fantastic advocates for both the words and the music.

- Matthew Hindson

A Feast of Lanterns II: Seven songs from Chinese poetry (2015) – Larry Sitsky

Almost before we had premiered A Feast Of Lanterns in its' original form as a song cycle for voice and piano, there were suggestions and requests to re-create the piece for ensemble and voice; and so here it is.

The added colour of the instruments, especially the percussion, allowed me to push the atmosphere of the 7 songs to a new level, inspired by Jenny Duck-Chong with Halcyon.

The cycle, in the first and last song, quotes a very early song of mine entitled "Footprints in the Snow" (my memory of these chords triggered by the same words in the text of the first song) and this simple triadic progression allowed me to mark the beginning and end of the cycle.

Chinese poetry has always invited setting to music for me, because of its directness, simplicity, compression and universal evocation; the ever-present imagery from nature is another attraction.

- Larry Sitsky

Five Senses: Five poems of Judith Wright (2012) – Ross Edwards

The common themes of my Judith Wright cycle are transcendence through direct experience of the Australian landscape intertwined with a passionate need for a sense of place and belonging. These are illustrated and reinforced by universal mythological associations drawn from various cultures. Sometimes deceptively simple and spontaneous, Wright's poems engage with a diversity of philosophical ideas that range between the abstract, symbolic, metaphysical, and the personal and immediate. Forming my own relationship to each poem was a profoundly enriching experience.

I was encouraged to compose the cycle by Jenny-Duck Chong who, having sung all of my vocal music within her range, asked for more. She previewed songs from the cycle with Bernadette Harvey at a concert of my work at the Sydney Conservatorium in May 2012. The following year Greta Bradman and Leigh Harrold presented a version for soprano voice at the Encounters Festival in Brisbane, and In 2014 Jenny, Bernadette and Claire Edwardes premiered the full mezzo version with added percussion.

Song, from The Two Fires (Collected Poems 1942-70) This powerful poem in the form of a verbal mandala was composed at a time when Judith Wright and her husband Jack McKinney were reading widely in Eastern philosophy. The dancer is Shiva, the "Auspicious One", Vedic Lord of the Dance and reconciler of the physical world of illusion with timeless eternity. Creator, destroyer and preserver, Shiva performs at the still centre of the cosmos surrounded by the "blazing wheel" which symbolizes universal pain and suffering. He is dancing to release humanity from this "bright periphery" and so transcend the endless cycle of birth and death.

To a Child, from the 1953 collection, The Gateway, is a visionary poem. The Australian literary scholar Sister Veronica Brady has observed that Wright, in the words of Blake, had the capacity to "look not with her eyes but through them." She seems to have retained from childhood this clarity of vision which, in bypassing the snare of the subjective, could illuminate the strange realities beyond. The poem's astonishing imagery reminds us that the workings of Nature are miraculous: the "bush of fire" is perhaps intended as a symbol of renewal.

The Lost Man is also from *The Gateway*. Through a succession of startling symbols, some with apparent Christological associations, others distinctly Pagan, it probes the mystical depths of a rainforest, where primordial forces act upon the trappings of our civilization, effacing the ego and revitalizing at first hand our involvement with nature and the spirit of the earth.

The Forest, from Collected Poems, expresses a yearning to enter a realm of timeless contemplation and strip away time-worn symbolism to reveal underlying truths. The flowers are strange until they are named, classified, and consigned to ordinary consciousness.

The final poem, *Five Senses*, is a poetic description of the creative act – weaving, or spinning material originating in the unconscious and stimulated by the power of the combined senses to produce an irresistible “rhythm that dances and is not mine”. To me, the poem expresses a glowing, almost Hasidic surge of joy which I’ve tried to convey in my setting.

Five Senses was commissioned by my friend Matthew Sandblom to commemorate the life and work of his late father, Eric Sandblom, conservationist and music lover, who dedicated his life to serving the community.

- Ross Edwards

If you would like to learn more about Australian composers and the different approaches they take to their own work, take a look at Halcyon’s **In Conversation With...** series.

Over more than two decades, Halcyon has developed many strong relationships with a wide network of Australian and international composers. In Conversation with... is an opportunity to get a little closer to some of these composers and find out a bit more about them and their work.

In this ongoing series, we discuss with them their craft, their process, their influences, and of course their approach to vocal writing. Recorded in conversation with Halcyon’s director, Jenny Duck-Chong, these interviews have an ease of familiarity but also provide useful insights into each composer’s work, their relationship with Halcyon and the pieces that they have written for the ensemble.

Watch [In Conversation With...](#) here.

biographies

Matthew Hindson AM (b. 1968, Wollongong) is one of the most-performed and most-commissioned composers in the world, and a leading Australian composer of his generation. As well as being performed by every Australian orchestra, the London Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Royal Philharmonic among many others, Matthew's music has been set by dance companies such as the Birmingham Royal Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, National Ballet of Japan and the Sydney Dance Company.

Matthew is the Deputy Dean and Associate Dean (Education) at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. From 2004-2010 he was the artistic director of the Aurora Festival which is dedicated to the work of living composers. In 2006 Matthew was made a member of the Order of Australia (AM) for his contributions to music education and composition. From 2009-2013 Matthew was the Chair of the Music Board of the Australia Council for the Arts, and from 2013-2015, a board member of the same organisation.

hindson.com.au

Born in China of Russian-Jewish parents, **Larry Sitsky** traveled to Australia in 1951, settling in Sydney. He studied piano from an early age and was granted a scholarship to the New South Wales Conservatorium of Music, where he graduated in piano and composition in 1955. In 1959 he won a scholarship to the San Francisco Conservatory, where he studied with the great Egon Petri for two years. He returned to Australia to join the staff of the Queensland Conservatorium of Music. In 1966 he was appointed Head of Keyboard Studies at the School of Music in Canberra (now part of the Australian National University), where he is now Distinguished Visiting Fellow, as well as Emeritus Professor.

Larry Sitsky has received many awards for his compositions and has had works commissioned by many leading Australian and International bodies. 1993 marked a huge national success with his opera *The Golem*, which is soon to be broadcast by the ABC and released online. In recognition of his various achievements, he was granted a Personal Professorial Chair at the Australian National University, and was awarded the University's very first Higher Doctorate in Fine Arts in 1997. In 2015 he received the Art Music Award for Distinguished Services to Australian Music and an AO from the Australian Government for services to Australian music in 2017.

www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/artist/sitsky-larry

Ross Edwards is an Australian composer whose distinctive sound world reflects his interest in deep ecology and his belief in the need to reconnect music with elemental forces, as well as restore its traditional association with ritual and dance. He also recognises the profound importance of music as an agent of healing. His music, universal in that it is concerned with age-old mysteries surrounding humanity, is at the same time connected to its roots in Australia, whose cultural diversity it celebrates, and from whose natural environment it draws inspiration, especially birdsong and the mysterious patterns and drones of insects. As a composer living and working on the Pacific Rim he is aware of the exciting potential of this vast region.

Edwards has composed prolifically in most musical genres. Works for the concert hall sometimes require special lighting, movement, costume and visual accompaniment – notably his Fourth Symphony, *Star Chant*, his oboe concerto *Bird Spirit Dreaming* and his saxophone concerto *Full Moon Dances*. His *Dawn Mantras* greeted the new millennium in an international telecast from the sails of the Sydney Opera House.

rossedwards.com

“a leading light in the fostering of new Australian art music”

waves IV

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www.creativepartnershipsaustralia.org.au



Regarded as a leading exponent in the field of new music, for the past twenty-one years **Halcyon** have presented stunning performances of vocal chamber music from around the world, with a special emphasis on Australian composition. A chameleonic ensemble of varying size and instrumentation, the line up is drawn together for each project by artistic director, mezzo soprano Jenny Duck-Chong.

Originally formed by singers Alison Morgan and Jenny Duck-Chong, since 1998 Halcyon has showcased many rarely heard international works and premiered new and recent offerings from some of Australia's most esteemed composers and been active in championing and commissioning new contemporary vocal chamber music, and forging lasting connections across the globe with composers, music centres and institutions.

www.halcyon.org.au

texts

Insect Songs (1998) – Matthew Hindson

1. Ants in the Shower Recess

Tiny black-skinned warriors,
the aboriginal inhabitants

of this suburb do not require
a land rights movement, having not

moved from it. The modest cuisine
of the coloniser (that's who

I am) fuels their factories:
the soldiers carry head-sized

sugar boulders, and crumbs bigger
than loaves back underground; their ranks

marching through the kitchen look like
columns of refugees.

The scouts they dispatched to my shower
have found some of yesterday's

personality, washing up in

the grouting. Their scientists proved

it edible: why not devour
Gulliver? And now they're waiting.

One day the daily monsoons
will not happen; the mountain-range

of food-ore will rest from earthquakes.
Then they can send the miners;

I will be excavated, with ants
like chains of firemen passing buckets

to each other, when their one thought
comes about – all of my skin

becomes a crowded market-place
my picked-clean skull swarming

with more ideas than ever
it contained before, except

that every one is this one idea.

Jamie Grant, from *The Refinery*

III: Autumn Thoughts - Text by Liu Ch'ang

Moonlight! The floating mists are gone,
a wind unveils the deep clear night.
Star rivals star,
and the silver river draws to her breast the
dreamy light.
Gaunt old trees cast shadows on the plain,
Little birds hushed by fear are stirring,
singing again,
And my heart a tumult of song,
and a torrent of wild wings shaking free,
Home, home, home,
I hear the long shrill of the far cicada calling
me.

IV: Along the Stream - Text by Li Po

The rustling nightfall strews my gown with
roses,
and wine-flushed petals bring forgetfulness of
shadow after shadow striding past.
I arise exultantly with the stars
and follow the sweep of the moon along the
hushing stream,
where no birds wake;
Only the far-drawn sigh of wary voices bidding
farewell.

V: Freezing Night - Text by Li Po

The night is full of storm-clouds over head.
The wild geese are frightened and cry out with
anxiety in the murky darkness.
The icy hills are covered with dense fog.

The only thing visible is a beautiful shadow
on a gleaming gauze window curtain.
Above the clouds the white moon is cold.
Under the clouds the storm wind is cold.
Heart full of sorrow,
tears dried up with sorrow,
the unbearable sorrow of a heart filled with
love.
How can I go on under the beating storm of
my thoughts?

VI: A Feast of Lanterns - Text by Yuan Mei

In spring, for sheer delight,
I set the lanterns swinging through the trees.
Bright as the myriad argosies of night,
that ride the crowded billows of the sky.
Red dragons leap and plunge in gold and silver
seas,
and, oh my garden gleaming cold and white,
you have out-shone the far faint moon on high.

VII: Song of the Night - Text by Ou-Yang Hsiu

In flowing crowds
the moon-born clouds cast their light and
shade over stairs of jade;
and all the moon-lit ways are one,
shining in silver unison.
Yet who can unravel the mystery of night?

Five Senses: Five poems of Judith Wright
(2012) – Ross Edwards

1. Song

O where does the dancer dance –
the invisible centre spin –
whose bright periphery holds
the world in which we wander in?

For it is he we seek –
the source and death of desire;
we blind as blundering moths
around that core of fire.

Caught between birth and death
we stand alone in the dark,
to watch the blazing wheel
on which the earth is a spark,

crying, Where does the dancer dance –
the terrible centre spin,
whose flower will open at last
to let the wanderer in?

2. To a Child

When I was a child I saw
a burning bird in a tree.
I see became I am,
I am became I see.

In winter dawns of frost
The lamp swung in my hand.
The battered moon on the slope
lay like a dune of sand'

and in the trap at my feet
the rabbit leapt and prayed
weeping blood, and crouched
when the light shone on the blade.

The sudden sun lit up
the webs from wire to wire;
the white webs, the white dew
blazed with a holy fire.

Flame of light in the dew,
flame of blood on the bush,
answered the whirling sun
and the voice of the early thrush.

I think of this for you.
I would not have you believe the world is empty
of truth,
or that men must grieve;

but hear the song of the martyrs
out of a bush of fire:
"All is consumed with love;
all is renewed with desire."

3. The Lost Man

To reach the pool you must go through the rain-forest –
through the bewildering midsummer of darkness
lit with ancient fern,
laced with poison and thorn.

You must go by the way he went – the way of the bleeding
hands and feet, the blood on the stones like flowers,
under the hooded flowers
that fall on the stones like blood.

To reach the pool you must go by the black valley
among the crowding columns made of silence,
under the hanging clouds
of leaves and voiceless birds.

To go by the way he went to the voice of the water,
where the priest-stinging tree waits with his whips and fevers
under the hooded flowers
that fall from the trees like blood,
you must forget the song of the gold bird dancing
over tossed light; you must remember nothing
except the drag of darkness
that draws your weakness under.

To go by the way he went you must find beneath you
that last and faceless pool, and fall. And falling
find between breath and death
the sun by which you live.

4. The Forest

When first I knew this forest
its flowers were strange.
Their different forms and faces
changed with the seasons' change –

white violets smudged with purple,
the wild-ginger pray,
ground-orchids small and single
haunted my day;

the thick-fleshed Murray-lily,
flame-tree's bright blood,
and where the creek runs shallow,
the cunjevoi's green hood.

When first I knew this forest,
time was to spend,
and time's renewing harvest
could never reach an end.

Now that its vines and flowers
are named and known,
like long-fulfilled desires
those first strange joys are gone.

My search is further.
There's still to name and know
beyond the flowers I gather
that one that does not wither –
the truth from which they grow.

5. Five Senses

Now my five senses
gather into a meaning
all acts, all presences;
and as a lily gathers
the elements together,
in me this dark and shining,
that stillness and that moving,
these shapes that spring from nothing,
become a rhythm that dances,
a pure design.

While I'm in my five senses
they send me spinning
all sounds and silences,
all shape and colour
as thread for that weaver,
whose web within me growing
follows beyond my knowing
some pattern sprung from nothing –
a rhythm that dances
and is not mine.

Judith Wright