



waves

halcyon waves

Acclaimed Australian ensemble Halcyon presents fascinating programs of new vocal chamber music from the 20th century and beyond. Since 2001 it has commissioned and premiered numerous new chamber works in concert. The Waves EP series has been created to produce studio-quality versions of some of these wonderful and diverse pieces as well as some Halcyon favourites. Waves II is Halcyon's second release and features Australian composers Ross Edwards and Dan Walker.

Meditative stillness wraps around joyous exuberance in *Maninya I*, Edwards' dynamic dance for voice and cello. *King Ludwig's Swans* is a musical watercolour, set by Walker with elegant beauty and commissioned for Halcyon's female voices and harp.

1 Ross Edwards *Maninya I* 10:54

Jenny Duck-Chong *mezzo-soprano* Geoffrey Garter *cello*

2-6 Dan Walker *King Ludwig's Swans*
I 4:39 II 3:04 III 4:02 IV 3:50 V 3:32

Alison Morgan *soprano* Belinda Montgomery *soprano* Jenny Duck-Chong *mezzo-soprano*
Jo Burton *mezzo-soprano* Genevieve Lang *harp*

composer notes

Maninya I (1981/1986) - Ross Edwards

Maninya I, for voice and cello, is the first of a series of instrumental and vocal pieces which I began in 1981. Its text consists of randomly chosen phonetic units grouped together to form rhythmic cells, or pseudo-words, one of which, maninya, came to connote certain characteristics of the music I was writing: its chant-like quality; its static harmonic basis; the general liveliness of its tempi; its terse, angular melodic shapes, quirky rhythms and repetitive structures similar to those used to heighten awareness in much non-western functional religious music. Far more important an influence than any music, however, was the natural environment, a timeless continuum from which much of the material was distilled and which remains to this day the supreme generative force of my work.

- Ross Edwards

King Ludwig's Swans (2004/2009) - Dan Walker

King Ludwig's Swans was written for Halcyon over a period of several years. Michael Dransfield's evocative and sometimes cryptic text revolves around 'mad' King Ludwig of Bavaria, whose fairy-tale palatial gardens and obsession with alchemy and the arcane has shrouded the 19th century king in intrigue. Much as Ludwig was something of an anachronism, musically I have explored some of the vocal techniques employed in the Italian stylings of the early baroque; florid lines, contrasts in texture and soloing opportunities within the ensemble.

I was conscious to avoid established cliches in the harp writing, and as a result it is often sparse and deliberate. Indeed, there appears only a single, sweeping glissando towards the end of the fifth movement, where Dransfield states with both a sense of finality and cyclic rebirth:

*'Above and below us
discovery freshens the pre-world,
The ancient gleams, in light
as for the first time.'*

- Dan Walker

biographies

One of Australia's best known and most performed composers, **Ross Edwards** has created a distinctive sound world aligned with principles of deep ecology while seeking to reconnect music with elemental forces and restore its traditional association with ritual and dance. His music, universal in that it is concerned with age-old mysteries surrounding humanity, is at the same time deeply 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 conscious of the exciting potential of this vast region.

Ross Edwards has composed prolifically in most musical genres. Some of his works for the concert hall allow for special lighting, movement and costume, notably his Fourth Symphony *Star Chant and Frog and Star Cycle*, a concerto for saxophonist Amy Dickson, percussionist Colin Currie and the Sydney Symphony. His *Dawn Mantras* greeted the new millennium in a global telecast from the sails of the Sydney Opera House to universal acclaim. Recent works include *Dances of Life and Death* for the Sydney Conservatorium Wind Symphony; *Singing the Love* for The Choir of King's College Cambridge and *Vespers for Mother Earth*, a large-scale work for the Judith Neilson Institute.

rossedwards.com

Composer, conductor and performer **Dan Walker** is one of Australia's most in-demand choral specialists. He has had works commissioned by the Sydney Symphony, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Gondwana Choirs and Halcyon. As a performer, Dan is a member of the professional vocal ensemble 'The Consort of Melbourne', Sydney-based Cantillation, and Pinchgut Opera. He has been a guest performer with The Song Company and was a founding member of early music ensemble 'The Parson's Affayre'. He is a keenly sought-after conductor, appearing as chorus-master for the Sydney and Melbourne Symphony Chorus, and is Artistic Director of Choristry and Habeas Chorus, the choir for the Melbourne legal community.

danwalkercomposer.com



HALCYON is a dynamic force for the promotion of new and recent chamber music for voice. Halcyon's original directors, singers Alison Morgan and Jenny Duck-Chong (cover photo, pictured left and right), shared a commitment to contemporary classical music and sought to showcase rarely heard international works alongside new and recent Australian compositions, drawing together some of Australia's most esteemed chamber soloists, conductors and singers in performance.

Since 1998 Halcyon has been active in championing and commissioning new contemporary vocal chamber music in performance, recording and online, forging lasting connections across the globe with composers, music centres and institutions. A chameleonic ensemble of varying size and instrumentation, Halcyon is led by current artistic director, mezzo soprano Jenny Duck-Chong.

www.halcyon.org.au

Over more than two decades, Halcyon has developed many strong relationships with a wide network of Australian and international composers. If you've enjoyed this recording you may be interested in Halcyon's [In Conversation With...](#) series on YouTube. Composers discuss their craft, their process, their influences, and their approach to vocal writing with Halcyon's director, Jenny Duck-Chong. These short interview clips provide useful insights into the composer's work, their relationship with Halcyon and the pieces that they have written for the ensemble.

Find more at [Halcyon on YouTube](#).

Produced by Halcyon

Engineered, mixed and mastered: Daniel Brown

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Graphic design: Liz Duck-Chong

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texts

King Ludwig's Swans (2004/09) - Dan Walker

I

the room is well equipped, no doors, fly in
through windows, lutes
pluck at flowers without breaking their green,
delicate stems. slow film, a lion and a gazelle
run across snow... their grace - they seem
to be playing, even
when the chase ends

*come into the lake, prince; we might
find each other where reflections meet ...*

II

in the palace, under trees...

*this is what i meant
the rituals*

coals quicken
and eyes

a princess studies
leaf writing on a terrace
while merlin bales out the sky...

principalities of star
friends of yellow flower *this is*
why you came

spells work
if they are secret
not written down, not
drawn in sand with twigs

read them in the sky
where merlin learnt them

III

when night ends we sleep
the alchemist of weather
weaves cloud with wind

wake to a perfect day
or if it rains
follow a corridor
set by the prince to go nowhere

blue lake walk
grey sky walk
green avenue white architraves

when day ends
a fire
dances

IV

we find the chamber of ghosts
all the kings came here, and their queens
who, also, dance

alchemy changes with light;
handful of chalk, ground moss, spilt
velvet

draped windows
drums
steps on old stairs

we come here almost never

V

at the edge of the palace
mountains

at their dim border
the world mutters worn curses

their armies do not come
they fear the flowers

above and
below us
discovery freshens the pre-world
the ancient gleams, in light
as for the first time

Michael Dransfield
from *King Ludwig's swans*