

Ross EDWARDS (born 1943)

Veni Creator Spiritus [1993]

- I Puro e tranquillo
- II Ritmico

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II Ritmico Ross Edwards is one of Australia's most renowned composers, whose works are regularly performed within our country and overseas. While elements of his music can be traced to numerous cultures around the world (including Buddhist, Aboriginal, Indonesian, Judaic, African and Christian), he maintains a uniquely Australian idiom. Through his music, Edwards evokes mankind's collective responsibility to our physical environment and universal need for spiritual fulfilment - whether it be through religious, cultural, meditative or any other means.

Completed in 1993, *Veni Creator Spiritus* (Come, O Creator Spirit) is an example of what Edwards calls his 'sacred' style of writing, in which he evokes the remote and spiritual through the use of soft tones, sparse textures and timeless drones. *Veni Creator Spiritus* is the name of the ninth-century Gregorian chant associated with the feast of Pentecost, the Roman Catholic Church's annual celebration of the descent of the Holy Spirit to the earth. Edwards opens this work with a poignant intonation of the hymn in the violin. This is shortly followed by its reinstatement in sustained notes in the viola, where it begins the *cantus firmus*. The movement of other voices around this line hearkens back to one of the oldest forms of contrapuntal writing, used in Renaissance motets and masses with, adds Edwards, 'a tinge of Japanese pentatonicism'. The devout, ethereal effect of the music is enhanced by omitting the double basses in the opening section, limiting the use of vibrato, and sustaining a drone to symbolise eternity, a concept heightened by displacement of the beat through ties and shifting note values. Momentum is achieved through the consistent re-entry of voices that gives rise to a somewhat dreamy chatter.

The second movement, while maintaining many of the qualities of the first, is jubilant and filled with energy and passion for life. These are characteristics of the earthy, robust and exuberant dance-chant style that Edwards names 'maninyas'. The asymmetrical rhythms and obsessive repetition suggest a desire to restore the intrinsic spontaneity to music. Where his sacred style focuses on contemplation of the inner self, his *maninyas* style is unashamedly extroverted, even eccentric with its changing metres. In *Veni Creator Spiritus*, Edwards seeks to merge qualities of both styles to symbolise unity within the diversity that exists in our world. His return to the plaintive yet soothing sounds of the chorale at the completion of the work, with its regular phrases, heavy silences and blending voices, expounds this idea of peace created out of chaos.

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