

David Fanshawe's

African Sanctus

with *Dona Nobis Pacem* (Australian Premiere)

5pm Sunday 31 August 2008 Melbourne Town Hall

Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Choir presents David Fanshawe's ***African Sanctus***, a fusion of tribal music, Latin Mass, Anglican liturgy and Muslim call to prayer. For the first time an Australian audience will hear the UK composer's *Dona Nobis Pacem*, and see his images of over 50 African tribes from his famous Sanctus Journey (1969 to 1973).

"Afro-Latin, tribal-choral masterpiece." The Observer

Recordings of frogs, a call to prayer from a Cairo mosque and Sudanese bell-ringing are part of this famous work that involves taped music from Egypt, Sudan, Uganda and Kenya. These counterpoint a live chorus, soprano soloists and instrumental ensemble.

Performers include live African dancers and drummers. Rock musicians, distinguished soprano Merlyn Quaife, award-winning jazz soprano Michelle Nicholle and Australian Children's Choir join RMP for this performance. RMP conductor Andrew Wailes describes the work as "an electrifying and dynamic concert experience". Over 350 images will be projected to accompany RMP's performance on August 31.



African Sanctus is an inclusive, idiosyncratic score, bringing together the sacred and profane through cultures of scattered African tribes and Fanshawe's own composition for choirs and soloists. In this work, two worlds meet – drum sequences, tribal songs and dances, pre-recorded events such as an Egyptian wedding, a rain song, Sudanese bell ringing and courtship dances. Fanshawe adorns his score with little cartoons and comments. *The Lord's Prayer* is a response to a family's lamentation over a dead fisherman in Uganda. The Hippo Man (left) from Lake Victoria is the iconic, symbolic figurehead of all the legends and myths of Africa.

African Sanctus, first performed in London in 1972, is an unorthodox setting of the Latin Mass, harmonised with traditional African music. Fanshawe recorded it as he travelled in a cross-shaped pilgrimage from the Mediterranean to Lake Victoria, and from the mountains of West Sudan to the Red Sea. He recorded songs and dances of more than 50 African tribes.

Dona Nobis Pacem was first performed in 1994 in Poole, UK. Meaning 'Give us Peace', it is a hymn for world peace and, for Fanshawe, completes the text of the "Agnus Dei" heard in *African Sanctus*. It takes the form of a canon, where the themes are passed from voice to voice and from instrument to instrument. Fanshawe says that it was written 'as a gesture of thanks to the world I have been privileged to see and experience.'

African Sanctus is at 5pm on Sunday 31 August in Melbourne Town Hall. Tickets are \$45 for adults (or \$60 for a premium seat), \$35 concession (including students) or \$20 for a junior (under 16). Tickets are available from Ticketmaster on 1300 136 100 & its outlets (charges apply). You can purchase directly through RMP on 03 9419 1582 or via www.rmp.org.au

For media interviews and images please call RMP Publicist, Joanna Stanley on 03 9380 9295 or 0425 735 715, or email joanna_stanley@iprimus.com.au