

This special birthday of Halcyon's is an occasion to celebrate fifteen years of engaging, eclectic new music wonderfully realised. Moreover, and perhaps more significantly, it is also an opportunity to acknowledge the courage and tenacity of its founders. As outsiders to the global market system, new music groups the world over face serious challenges: scraping together enough funding, drumming up and maintaining a discerning audience, attracting and keeping quality performers. Sydney's are certainly no different; if anything, local cultural priorities make their fight all the more gruelling. Given these circumstances, it is extraordinary Halcyon has not only survived, but flourished, both as a performer and progenitor of new musical expression.

*A King's **Manifesto*** is all about praising this fortitude. Somewhat late 18<sup>th</sup> century in tone and pretence, the poem draws anachronistically upon images of pre-industrial growth, fertility and abundance. Unlike its literary ancestors, however, it delights in the taming and tilling of nature, rather than revelling in its unfettered beauties. The music itself mirrors this (my) take on Halcyon's legacy. While lacking the appropriate stylistic markers, it nevertheless voices something of the Romantic hero(ine)'s struggle, though here as a civiliser of, not an apologist for natural inhospitality. Rich, wild gestures are held in check by harmonic irrigation methodically constructed; the joy here is the wonder of planning, of engineering, of building something out of nothing.