

**Maria Grenfell**

**Program Note**

**Maui Tikitiki a Taranga (1998)**

*Maui Tikitiki a Taranga* ("Maui formed in the topknot of Taranga") was a demi-god found in the tribal myths of the Maori people of New Zealand.

Maui, the fifth and youngest child, was born at the edge of the sea. His mother, Taranga, thought he was stillborn, and wrapped him in a tuft of her hair and set him adrift. He was cared for by the seaweed until a breeze blew him ashore, where he was saved and brought up by one of his great-ancestors.

Maui was a great prankster. In one of his mischievous moods he decided to put out all the fires in the world. To bring fire back, he had to find Mahuika, the goddess of fire. He was awestruck upon meeting her, but decided to play a trick on her by taking fire from her fingernails one at a time, until she realised his game and threw fire to the ground, catching everything alight. Maui changed himself into a hawk to escape the flames, which singed his feathers. He called upon his ancestor to send rain and drench the fire, depriving Mahuika of her powers.

Maui decided to defeat death by journeying to where the earth meets the sky, where lived his great-ancestress Hine nui te po ("Great Hine the Night"). He was accompanied by many birds, and told them his plan to enter the body of the sleeping Hine and so defeat death. The birds sat quietly trying not to laugh as Maui, in the form of a caterpillar, crawled towards Hine. Suddenly the fantail could be quiet no longer and laughed aloud, dancing about with delight. Hine awoke with a start, realised Maui's trickery, and he was killed.

*Maui Tikitiki a Taranga*, concerto for flute and orchestra, was premiered by James Walker (flute) and the University of Southern California Symphony Orchestra in November 1998, conductor Jung-Ho Pak.