**FEATURE**

**International Percussion**

**Percussion in Australia**

Gary D. France

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**PERCUSSION EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA**


- **Secondary Schools (Public)**

  Australia is a vast country roughly the size of the United States with a population of only 16 million (approximately the same as greater New York). In Australia there are six states and two territories. The dispersion of population often creates an overwhelming sense of isolation. For example; Perth, Western Australia, is a city of 1.4 million people. The nearest major city to Perth is Adelaide (roughly 1000 miles). Imagine, if you would, living in San Diego, California and travelling to the closest major city, in any direction, Houston, Texas. The east coast of Australia is more densely populated. However, a degree of isolation certainly exists in each state.

  Percussion is taught through each state's education system in public and private schools. There is a set curriculum (set individually by each state) which provides guidelines for music instrument instruction with a variety of grading systems. The Percussion curriculum and education have traditionally been left up to the discretion of each individual teacher. There are basically two areas of teaching done in percussion: orchestral and drum set. History has separated these areas quite severely in Australia. It is quite common for a secondary school (high school) to employ two different teachers, one for each genre. When a student prepares for college or university entrance in music he or she takes a TEE, Tertiary Entrance Examination. This is a four year course of instruction which begins in year 9 of high school and concludes in year 12. Areas to be chosen are selected from Keyboards, Timpant, Drum Set, Snare Drum, and Multiple Percussion. Although this is a comprehensive list, a student could possibly choose for example, Drumset, Multiple Percussion and Snare Drum. This student could study percussion for 4 years of high school and never have contact with a pitched percussion instrument. As very few schools can actually supply costly keyboard percussion instruments, the above scenario is more than common.

- **Secondary Schools (Private)**

  There are of course very good individual private schools which have a commitment to the arts in any major city. However these schools are usually costly, and demand often outstrips supply. For private teaching there is a set curriculum set by the AMEB (Australia Music Examination Board), similar to the Trinity College in London, which includes a set syllabus for music instruction for all instruments with the exception of percussion. As of this date, there are percussion curricula in use in each state as developed by individual percussion teachers. It is hoped that through the Percussive Arts Society International, Australia Chapter, a national curriculum can be submitted and adopted by the AMEB within the near future.

- ** Conservatorium and University High Schools**

  There are several state schools (Conservatoriums) which are involved in the training of young musicians at
a pre-college level. Each institution has a pre-tertiary training program. Each program consists of a core component of musicology/theory as well as some individual instruction and masterclasses on related instruments. Programs vary from full-time music high schools to afternoon programs one day per week. Entrance is competitive as there are often funding problems with associated programs creating limited access to the general public.

- **Private Percussion Teachers**

  There are of course fine percussion specialists in every major arts centre. Each main city has a state orchestra under the direction of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. It is not uncommon for an associated percussionist to teach at an institution as adjunct faculty. Public schools may employ part time percussion tutors to teach percussion and drumset. Due to the lack of a national curriculum or syllabus, percussion teaching often focuses on individual teacher's specialities or fashionable trends. As part time teachers change from semester to semester, students seldom receive consistent quality education.

- **Colleges and Universities**

  The policy within secondary schools has created a strong degree of specialization between teachers and students. At the tertiary level this has been heightened by the division of college and university courses in jazz and classical music. To date, there are less than 10 full time percussion teachers employed nationally at the University level.

  Isolation being the case, this writer will outline the university percussion program currently implemented at the Western Australian Conservatorium of Music. All students study the full range of percussion instruments. There are technical levels which must be achieved on snare drum, and mallet-keyboards by all students regardless of major. All students study percussion literature and world music in percussion ensemble. 1990 repertoire included 3rd Construction, John Cage, Ballet Mécanique, George Antheil, and Ionization, Edgard Varese. Below I have listed the percussion components of the two Bachelor degrees offered by this institution.

  **Bachelor of Music/Percussion—Orchestral Studies:** 2 Hours Private percussion instruction per week; 2 Hour Masterclass in Orchestral Percussion repertoire (Glass taught by Principal Percussionist ABC Orchestra Perth); 1 Hour Percussion Lit. (historical perspective); 1 Hour second study instrument of choice (can include Drumset, Latin Percussion, Jazz Vibes, Electronic Midi Studio); and 4 Hours Percussion Ensemble per week.
Bachelor of Music/Percussion — Jazz Studies: Similar to classical with an emphasis in jazz styles and traditions; 4 Hours Percussion Ensemble per week.

Most Australian tertiary institutions also offer a range of alternate diplomas and certificates. The above institution offers: Certificate in Jazz 1 year; Certificate in Music 1 year; Associate Diploma in Jazz 2 years; Diploma in Music Performance 3 years; Bachelor in Education/Music 4 years.

Percussion Composition in Australia

Prior to 1960 composers of note have studied and worked in Europe and the United States; most notably perhaps, is Percy Grainger. These composers will be reviewed, perhaps, in future articles. Due to practicality, this article will focus on percussion music and chamber music, including percussion, since 1960. The amount of Australian literature involving percussion has rapidly increased since the conception of several professional and part time contemporary music groups. These ensembles, often comprised of members of symphony orchestras and/or free-lance players, have roots firmly established in the growth of young composers. Most of the music listed in the chronology to follow was a direct result of commissions placed by musicians for national and international performance. Therefore it is difficult to classify these very different compositions into styles. In compiling this list many percussionists around Australia have contributed. If you are interested in any of the compositions listed there are two references to consult:

1. THE AUSTRALIAN MUSIC CENTRE
   (the Australian representative to the UNESCO International Music Council) PO Box 49, Broadway, Sydney NSW 2007 Phone (02)-212-1611, Fax (02)-281-9569
2. PERCUSSIVE ARTS SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL, AUSTRALIAN CHAPTER
   2 Bradford Street, Mount Lawley WA 6050, Phone (09)379-6443, Fax (09)370-2910

Chronology of Australian Percussion Music

1960—Sonata for Viola and Percussion, by Peter Sculthorpe.
1961—Iranda IV, by Peter Sculthorpe. For solo violin, percussion and string orchestra.
1963—Skiagram, by Helen Gifford. For flute, viola and vibraphone.
1966—Sun Music, by Peter Sculthorpe. For SATB chorus, piano and percussion.
1970—*Interiors/Exteriors*, by Richard Meale  For 2 pianos, percussion trio  
1971—*How the Stars Were Made*, by Peter Sculthorpe  For percussion quartet.  
1973—*Meridian*, by David Lumsdale. For piano, percussion and pre-recorded tape  
1973—*Facade*, by Carl Vine. For solo percussion.  
1973—*Hydra*, by Gerard Brophy. For percussion quartet  
1974—*Continuum for Six*, by Paul Copeland. For percussion sextet, graphic notation  
1974—*Sub cruce lumen at sonitus*, by Tristram Cary. For trumpets, trombones and percussion  
1974—*The Ten Sephiroths of the Kabbalah*, by Larry Sitsky. For SATB chorus and 3 percussionists  
1975—*Cancion*, by Greame Koehne. For soprano, piano, harp, guitar, celeste and 4 percussionists.  
1975—*Folk Songs*, by David Morgan. For 4 keyboard percussionists.  
1975—*Three*, by Barry Conyngham. For percussion and string quartet  
1975—*Arcade IV*, by Keith Humble. For guitar and percussion  
1975—*Raga Music Three—Elision*, by Peter Tahourdin. For clarinet (bass cl.), viola, guitar, harpsichord and percussion.  
1978—*Worlds Blis*, by Atis Danckops. For 5 percussionists and organ  
1979—*Excerpts from Dante’s Purgatorio*, by Gerard Brophy. For guitar and percussion.  
   i) Il cammino de gli innocenti (solo guitar)  
   ii) Danza del bambino candido  
   iii) Duro e disspasto a salute alle stella  
1979—*Haiku*, by Robert Lloyd. For vibraphone solo  
1979—*Monkeys: Xylophone Solo*, by Robert Lloyd  
1979—*Two Solos for Side Drum*, by Paul Sarich  
1979—*Celebration*, by Peter Tahourdin. For flute, oboe, bassoon and percussion  
1979—*Whirling Dance*, by Robert Lloyd. For percussion quartet.  
1979—*Etude on Kandian Drum Rhythms*, by Robert Lloyd. For solo percussionist.  
1980—*Quartet*, by Bozidar Kas. For flute, viola, percussion and piano  

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26 Percussive Notes
1980—Sticks, by Robert Lloyd. For 4 drummers.
1981—Dialogue No. Four, by Peter Tahourdin. For trombone and percussion.
1982—Stick Dance, by Andrew Schulz. For clarinet, marimba and piano.
1982—Percussion Quartet, by Colin Bright.
1982—Deserts, by Trevor Pearce. For piano and percussion.
1982—A Running Game Song for Children, by Larry Sitsky. For piano and percussion.
1982—For Marimba and Tape, by Martin Wesley-Smith. Marimba with pre-recorded tape.
1982—Isoprisms, by Robert Douglas. For flute, trombone, percussion and piano.
1982—Boat Song, by Andrew Ford. For bass clarinet and marimba.
1982—Tableaux, by Riccardo Formosa. For piccolo, bass clarinet, percussion and harpsichord.
1982—Chamber Concerto, by Gerald Glynn. For flute, clarinet, viola, drums, marimba and piano.
1982—Facing the Danger, by Vincent Plush. For speaker, variable melodic/tuned percussion, voices.
1982—With a View to Infinity, by Andrew Schultz. For flute, percussion and piano.
1983—Quidong, by Michael Whitticker. For oboe, guitar and percussion.
1983—Soundscape for Percussion and Orchestra, by Richard Mills. For timp, 4 perc. harp, piano/celeste, strings.
1983—Helices, from the Wakefield Chronicles, by Vincent Plush. For percussion quartet.
1983—Fun and Games, by David Morgan. 7 movements for percussion quartet.
1984—Tulip Stick Talk, by Colin Bright. For percussion quartet (marimba, wood drums, tom toms, temple bells).
1984—Echoes/Fantasies, by Ian Shanahan. For bass clarinet, vibraphone and tubular bells.
1984—**Down Under**, by David Morgan. For 7 percussionists.
1984—**Esparto Grass**, by Benjamin Thorne. For percussion quartet.
1984—**Kangaroo Hunt**, by David Lumsdale. For piano and percussion.
1984—**Karvais for solo percussionist**, by Richard Davis Hames
1984—**A Different Kind of Jazz**, by Atis Danckops. For 4 percussionists
1984—**Quice: Ritual for Perambulatory Percussionist**, by Richard Davis Hames
1984—**KaKan**, by Anne Boyd. For alto flute, marimba, and piano.
1985—**Reflections**, by Ross Edwards. For piano and 3 percussion
1985—**Beast From Air**, by Brenton Broadstock. For trombone and percussion
1985—**Windmill**, by Neil Currey. For clarinet, DX7, 2 percussion and piano
1985—**Trio No. 3**, by Kieth Humble. For flute, percussion and piano
1985—**Windstream—percussion solo**, by Gillian Whitehead
1985—**Pace**, by Stephen Leek. For cello and percussion
1985—**Bellevue II**, by Michael Smetanin. For tenor sax, trombone and percussion
1985—**Maninya IV**, by Ross Edwards. For clarinet (or bass clarinet), trombone and marimba
1986—**Omphalo Centric Lecture**, by Nigel Westlake. For marimba quartet (playable on 2 marimbas)
1986—**Antiphon for Two Drummers**, by Paul Sarcich
1986—**Plangge**, by Michael Whittaker. For percussion quartet
1986—**Aubergine 7**, by Benjamin Thorne. For percussion trio
1986—**Four Duets for One Marimba**, by Paul Sarcich. For two players on one marimba
1986—**Ceremony No. 1**, by Roger Smalley. For percussion quartet
1986—**Flower Songs**, by Ross Edwards. For 16 voices and 2 percussion
1986—**Diabolis in Musica**, by Larry Sttsky. For percussion quartet
1986—**Memoirs**, by Mark Isaacs. For vibrphone, marimba, percussion and piano
1986—**Impulses**, by Roger Smalley. For flute, cello, trombone, percussion, piano and DX7
1986—**White Knight and Beaver**, by Martin Wesley-Smith. For trombone, marimba, and tape
1987—**Reminiscences**, by Robert Smallwood. For clarinet, percussion and piano
1987—**Webb Spinner**, by Daryl Pratt. For vibrphone.
1987—**Franz**, by Daryl Pratt. For trombone and percussion
1987—**Suck Bop a Dope**, by Daryl Pratt. For two percussionists.
1987—**Fabian Theory**, by Nigel Westlake. For solo percussion and digital delay
1987—**Recitative and Arias for Oboe and Percussion**, by Stuart Davies-Slate. For oboist and multi-percussion
1987—**Time Pieces**, by Mary Mageau. For SATB chorus and optional percussion.
1987—**Jazz Suite**, by Eric Bryce. For percussion quartet
1987—**Dialogue for Two**, by Peter Brideoake. For percussion and clarinet.
1987—**Rivers**, by Tristram Cary. For percussion quartet and two tapes.
1987—**Time Locked in His Tower**, by David Adams. For flute, guitar, and percussion
1987—**Refrations for Six**, by Stephen Benfall. For flute, tenor trombone, cello, piano, DX7 and percussion.
1987—**Beta-Globin DNT**, by Roger Frampton. For flute, oboe, trombone, percussion and piano.
1987—**Descent of the Avator**, by Jeff Pressing. For alto sax, percussion, percussion, keyboards
1987—**Percussion Music One**, by Phil Treloar. For solo multi-percussion
1987—**Miniature III**, by Carl Vine. For flute, tuba, piano and percussion
1987—**Aria**, by Carl Vine. For soprano, flute, cello, piano, celeste and percussion
1987—**Elegy**, by Carl Vine. For flute, cello, trombone, 2 piano and percussion.
1987—**Florilegium II**, by Vincent Plush. Concertino for solo marimba and ensemble
1988—**Pas de Deux**, by Allan Walter. For trombone, piano, percussion
1988—**Defying Gravity**, by Carl Vine. For percussion quartet
1988—**From Your Lips to Gods Ear**, by Mark Pollard. For flute/picccolo, oboe and percussion.
1988—**Percussion Concerto**, by Carl Vine. For soloist and orchestra
1988—**Windmill II**, by Neil Currey. For clarinet, cello, contrabass, piano and percussion
1988—**Conerto da Camera for Percussion and Strings**, by Paul Sarcich.
1988—**Ball the Jack**, by Stephen Bull. For marimba, drum machine and electric bass.
1988—**Cyme**, by Mary Finester. For guitar and percussion.
1988—**Fractured Fancies**, by Felix Werder. For piano, viola and percussion.
1988—**Renunciation**, by Felix Werder. For viola, percussion and orchestra.
1988—**October 88**, by Rainer Linz. For trombone and percussion.
1988—**Shadow Play**, by Daryl Pratt. For trombone and percussion.
1989—**Parabola**, by Andrew Ford. For two voices, bass clarinet, percussion and piano.
1989—**Real Illusion**, by Roger Frampton. For flute, oboe, trombone, percussion and piano.
1989—**Homage to the Ancient**, by Peter Meyers. For trombone, percussion and piano.
1989—**Drum Song**, by Graeme Leak. For percussion quartet.
1989—**Variations (a pinch of salt)**, by Allen Walker. For flute, trombone, piano, percussion and tape.
1989—**Quartet**, by Richard Vella. For flute, trombone, piano and percussion.
1989—**Song of the Sybils**, by Graham Hair. For flute/piccolo, oboe/english horn, trombone, two percussion, keyboards, soprano, mezzo-soprano and contralto.
1989—**Divisions of Labor**, by Paul Grabowsky. For flute, oboe, trombone, alto sax, two percussion.
1989—**Ludus Ex Nominum**, by Bozidar Kos. For flute, oboe, trombone, percussion and piano.
1989—**Chamber Concerto**, by David Harris. For solo marimba and seven percussionists.
1989—**Apostrophe**, by Peter Clinch. For piano, viola, doublebass, clarinet and percussion.
1989—**Moving Air**, by Nigel Westlake. For percussion quartet and tape.
1989—**Partita alla Tedesca**, by David Morgan. For viola and percussion.
1989—**Sun Song**, by Peter Sculthorpe. For percussion quartet.
1990—**Nderua**, by Michael Atherton. For percussion quartet with bamboo or PVC stamping tubes.
1990—**Ballad**, by Daryl Pratt. For soprano solo, choir and percussion quartet.
1990—**Percuszjon**, by Peter Brideoake. For solo percussion.
1990—**Solo for Marimba and Tape**, by Tristram Cary.
1990—**Disco**, by Michael Barkl. For percussion quartet and sequencer.

**Australian Performing Ensembles**

In Australia there are many contemporary performing ensembles. There is naturally an emphasis on performing Australian compositions. In this article I have included three professional and one university group.
Synergy

Formed in 1974, Synergy has the dual distinction of being Australia's premier percussion quartet as well as its longest established contemporary group. Based in Sydney, the ensemble has commissioned countless new works from Australian composers, presenting them alongside acknowledged percussion classics from the international repertoire (Xenakis, Cage, Takemitsu being just an example of the composers represented). The group's concerts also include such diverse elements as traditional Japanese drumming, electronic and computer music and music theatre.

Synergy has been the recipient of three national awards for performance of Australian works and recent highlights include performances in Paris in 1989, at the 1990 Adelaide Festival and at the 1990 Huddersfield Contemporary Festival.

Future plans include a musical theatre season in Sydney, concerts in Melbourne and South Australia as well as a tour of Japan and the U.S. Synergy has recorded one CD as part of the Canberra School of Music’s Anthology of Australian Music and will have a second CD released shortly.

The Nova Ensemble

The Nova Ensemble, based in Perth, Western Australia, was formed in 1983 by percussionist, conductor and composer David Pye, to perform the major chamber ensemble works of the 20th century with a particular focus on the use of percussion both separately and in mixed ensembles. The ensemble has a flexible format exploring a variety of genre, with core groups including: percussion quartet, two pianos and percussion and winds, strings and percussion.

Nova also includes actors, singers and dancers as the occasion warrants. Programming regularly includes works commissioned by local composers. In 1990, the Nova Ensemble was awarded the Sounds Australian Composer’s Award for the most distinguished contribution to the presentation of Australian fine music by an organization whose primary purpose is the presentation of new music. The Nova Ensemble has performed for the Festival of Perth, The New York Winter Festival and the Barossa Valley Festival in South Australia. Future tours include Japan and Europe.
Pipeline

Pipeline, one of Australia's leading contemporary music ensembles was formed in 1987 by Simone deHann (trombone) and Daryl Pratt (percussion). The music they perform embraces a wide range of styles and musical processes and reflects their diverse backgrounds as performers/composers. A primary aim of Pipeline is to develop a relationship with Australian composers in which both performers and composers are active in the creative process. This emphasis on collaboration results in a more fluid relationship between improvisation, composition and performance.

Western Australian Conservatorium of Music Percussion Ensemble

The Western Australian Conservatorium of Music Percussion Ensemble contains from 4 to 19 players. Students from both jazz and classical studies combine to explore, workshop, and perform percussion literature and world music. Being a university ensemble, there is a dedication to 20th century classics as well as new composition. The W.A. Conservatorium Percussion Ensemble, under its director Gary France, has performed many Australian premiers and is highly sought after for school concerts and workshops. Recent performances include the York Winter Festival, The Festival of Perth, and the 1990 EVOS Contemporary Music Series which included an Australian national broadcast on ABC FM.

PERCUSSION MANUFACTURING IN AUSTRALIA

Percussion music has historically required the performing percussionist to improvise, adapt, and develop his or her own instruments. In Australia there is a fine tradition of instrument makers.

Jim Bailey

Jim Bailey lives in the hills of Adelaide, South Australia. Jim teaches percussion at the South Australian college of Advanced Education. I had the privilege of meeting Jim on my first trip to S.A. in 1987. Jim builds handcrafted keyboard instruments, drums, and the usual assortment of handy sticks, mallets, and small items. Up to the present time Jim has built a collection of marimbas, vibraphones, xylophones, and glockenspiels. Each instrument is individually designed and hand made. The bars are made of Honduras Rosewood and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd partials tuned, and the clash caused by side harmonics eliminated. All these instruments have been full concert sized, and used during the Australian tours of the
members of the Steve Reich Ensemble and during solo performances by Bill Moersch. Jim also spends much time re-tuning existing instruments, and in particular, renovating the pre-1920 Leedy and Deagan instruments. Jim also does much of the tuning and the maintenance on keyboard and percussion instruments for universities and professional orchestras in Australia. Among Jim’s recent developments is an electronic vibraphone pick-up.

Brady Drums

Chris Brady has been making hand-crafted drums and drumset-related products for many years. The two timbers principally used are Wandoo (Eucalyptus redunca) and Jarrah (Eucalyptus marginata), both of which are indigenous to the south of Western Australia. These woods are extremely hard and can produce a truly original sound. Some innovative products created by Brady include 10” and 12” snare drums. Brady drums are used by professional drummers world-wide and have received reviews in many current industry periodicals.

Chris Murdock

Soon after joining the Academy of Performing Arts in Perth, Western Australia, Chris became interested in the crafts of blacksmithing, welding, metal fabrication, wood-turning and carpentry. When programming contemporary music, I am often required to commission various instruments from Chris for performance. In 1989 Mr. Murdock created the first 3 chromatic octave set of Cençerros (Mexican Cowbells) in Australia. These were used this year in the West Australian premier of Et Exspecto Ressurectionem Mortuorum, Olivier Messiaen, and The Black Page, Frank Zappa. Other instruments have ranged from Teponaxtle (log drum) for Third Construction, John Cage, to tuned claves, Music for Pieces of Wood, Steve Reich. Recently Chris has designed the alarm bells for the Australian premier of Ballet Mécanique, George Antheil.

Hallstand

Colin Piper and Michael Hall, Sydney percussionists, formed Hallstand. This company produces innovative products for percussionists. Hallstand has a system of mounting traps, accessories and tables that are currently in use by many solo performers and symphony orchestras throughout Australia.

Editor’s Note:

Numerous recent programs of percussion performances in Australia will appear in the program section of the August issue of Percussive Notes.
At the Percussive Arts Society International Conference in Philadelphia, we introduced a revolutionary new concept in drums.