

The Western Australian Conservatorium of Music Percussion Ensemble is an ensemble within the classical department of music. Throughout its six year history the ensemble, under the direction of Gary France has presented the rich and diverse repertoire written exclusively for percussion. The ensemble has performed national broadcasts for ABC Fine Music as well as numerous public performances for the people of Western Australia.

PERFORMERS

Alice Emor
Neville Talbot
Colin Mills
Iain Robbie
Paul Barnes
Warren Harvey
Darren Moore

GARY DOUGLASS FRANCE

Gary is a native of Syracuse New York, U.S.A. Mr France, Lecturer in Percussion at the Western Australian Conservatorium of Music, Perth, Australia, performs in both the classical and jazz genres. He received his Bachelor of Music degree (Music Education) in 1979 from the State University of New York, Crane School of Music. He completed his Master of Music degree (Orchestral Performance) in 1987 at North Texas State University. While at North Texas, Gary became the first drummer to direct one of the prestigious Jazz Lab Bands.

Mr France's current projects include studies in South Indian Karnatic music with Sri T.A.S. Mani and studies in the music of Java and West Africa. In 1994, Mr France will present three world premiere compositions for percussion: 'From Now for Solo Percussionist' by Edward Applebaum, 'Time and Space' for solo Marimba and Vibraphone by Sydney composer Roger Frampton and 'Percussion Concerto for Solo Percussionist and Symphony Orchestra' by Michael Nelson for which Mr France was a 1993 Australia Council recipient. Mr France is Artistic Director of the twenty piece **Perthcity Jazz Orchestra** and drummer with the nationally acclaimed recording group 'Dude Ranch'.

PROGRAMME

Music for Pieces of Wood - Reich (1973)

Alice Emor- student director

**October Mountain - Hovhaness (1957)*

Movements 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Darren Moore- Marimba Soloist

**Djilile - Sculthorpe (1990)*

**Toccata - Chavez (1942)*

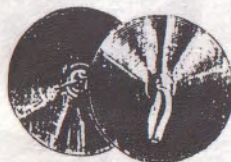
Movements 1, 2, 3

** West Australian Premiere*



'MUSIC FOR PIECES OF WOOD'- Minimalism in music has recieved increased attention since its introduction to music in the late 1960s by composers such as Reich and Riley. Its style has provided a fresh compositional alternative to atonality and serialism in the twentieth century. Steve Reich's **'Music for Pieces of Wood'** recieved its premiere performance in 1973. I first performed it in 1979 with the Abraxas Percussion Group for the Music Educators National Conference in Atlantic City U.S.A. under the supervision of the composer. **'Music for Pieces of Wood'** requires African Claves specially tuned to D#, B, A, C#, D# 8va. As these instruments are not available commercially I commissioned Chris Murdock, instrument maker and artist, better known for his audio work at the W.A. Academy of Performing Arts, to reproduce the instruments specified by Reich. This chamber ensemble was coached by student director Alice Emor.

'OCTOBER MOUNTAIN'- Alan Chakmajian (Hovhaness) recieved a scholarship to study with Bohuslav Martinu in 1942. **'October Mountain'** is the name of a country road in the heart of the Berkshire mountains near Tangelwood, Massachusetts. It was on this road in 1942 where Hovhaness "parked his car one afternoon and composed the score for his percussion piece of the same name". **'October Mountain'** is scored for six players. The work is divided into five sections and is roughly architectonic. That is, the first and fourth sections resemble each other and the second and fifth sections are related. The third section stands alone. The overall effect of **'October Mountain'** is one of a spiritual chant. The marimba, although a solo voice, is merely a bright thread in the inter-woven tapestry of oriental and eastern influences. The percussion writing of Alan Hovhaness greatly expanded and improved the language and literature of the percussion ensemble. Henry Cowell has written in the Musical Quarterly that: "Hovhaness' music sounds modern (but not ultra modern) in a natural and uninhibited fashion, because he has found new ways to use the archaic materials with which he starts, by following their natural trend towards modal sequence and poly modalism. His innovations do not break with early traditions. His is a moving, long-breathed music- splendidly written and unique in style. It is contemporary development....which sounds like the music of nobody else at all".



'DJILILE'- **'Djilile'**, for percussion quartet, is based on an adaptation, with additional material, of the Aboriginal melody **'Whistling Duck on a Billabong'**. It was collected in northern Australia in the late 1950s by A.P. Elkin and Trevor Jones. **'Djilile'** was first performed by the Sydney-based percussion ensemble **'Synergy'** on the 7th March, 1990 at the Adelaide Festival of the Arts.

'TOCCATA'- Carlos Chavez (1899-1978) conductor, composer, pianist, educator and musical scholar is generally considered to be the leading Latin/American composer of his generation. As inaugural director of the Mexico Symphony Orchestra (1928-1948), Director of the National Conservatory (1928-1933) and founder of the Pan American Association of Composers he forged the direction of twentieth century Mexican music.

Chavez's interest in Aboriginal rather than Hispanic cultures provided a clear direction for his percussion writing demonsrated in **'Toccata for Percussion Instruments'**. Aaron Copland has characterised Chavez as one composer that: "has succeeded so well in using folk material in its pure form while also solving the problem of its complete amalgamation into an art form".

Completed in 1942 as a commission for John Cage, **'Toccata for Percussion Instruments'** did not recieve its first performance until the 13th August, 1948 (although there is some confusion about that date). When consulted, Cage wrote in a letter dated 24th April 1980: "He (Chavez) used conventional percussion techniques (particularly rolls) which my players could not perform. I am glad that the piece was written, grateful that he did it, and have always been sad that we were unable to present it".

'Toccata for Percussion Instruments' calls for indigenous percussion instruments, or the modern facsimile thereof. Chavez calls for a variety, eight in total, of European and Indian (Aztec) drums. They range from the small Indian Drum, highest in pitch, through to the Bombo (Bass Drum) which is the lowest voice of the ensemble. **'Toccata'** is organised into standard symphonic forms. The first and third movements are in sonata form, and the second movement has a ternary structure. Chavez utilises the relative pitches of the percussion instruments to create implied melodies thus replacing the traditional tonic dominant relationship of the sonata form.

Gary France

