

Canberra School of Music will present an exciting series of percussion concerts at the Belconnen Theatre, says **Philip O'Brien**.

FOLLOWING the example of Benjamin Britten, it could almost be called Gary France's "Young Person's Guide to Percussion".

Over the next few days the Percussion Department of the Canberra School of Music will present a series of concerts at the Belconnen Theatre to demonstrate just how accessible the art of percussion really is.

It's part of the School of Music's continuing practice of taking music into the community, says France, who is head of percussion at the CSM.

From Wednesday through Friday mornings, France and his ensemble DRUMatiX will present school concerts, complete with staging and lighting, in the Belconnen Theatre.

Then, in the theatre on Saturday morning, there'll be two "Kiddicussion" concerts especially for families.

All concerts are hands-on, with opportunities for children to come up and play on a choice of more than 100 percussion instruments — everything from drums to marimbas to xylophones and glockenspiels.

In previous sessions, France says, children have delighted at the opportunity to improvise and at the realisation that percussion instruments can be made from everyday objects.

On Friday night the full strength of the percussion department will be on display when France and DRUMatiX perform together with the ANU African Ensemble.

The program will showcase the variety of contemporary composition for percussion, from Australian Ross Edwards' *Prelude and Dragon Fly Dance* to Stomps' *Stinkin' Garbage* performed on metal garbage cans.

The pre-tertiary percussion ensemble will perform Alan Hovhaness'

October Mountain while the tertiary ensemble will perform a work by American Lou Harrison for ocharina, guitar and percussion.

There'll be a *Tango Suite* by Astor Piazzola for two marimbas as well as two works — *Ritmacas 5 and 6* — by the Spanish-born composer Amadeo Roldan.

"He spent the final part of his life in Cuba," France says, "and these works are profound in their densities and aggregates of sound as well as in their use of folkloric Cuban-African rhythms."

The ANU African Ensemble will perform two compositions by France. The ensemble, which has been performing for several years, is part of the ANU World Music Ensemble and recently launched the Institute of the Arts Fusion Festival.

Oubouno drums, recently bought back from Ghana, will feature in this segment. France says, "If you recall those old Tarzan movies then these were the drums which would 'talk' from village to village".

The concert series continues the trend in education of demystifying music. And percussion is well-placed to take advantage of this, France says.

"Percussion, especially drumming, is also becoming an important part of events such as the National Folk Festival and Womad. It's very visual and exciting. And anyone can play a percussion instrument."

Bookings on 6125 5731 are essential for the schools concerts in the Belconnen Theatre from June 4 to 6 at 10am, 11.30am and 1pm, as well as for the Kiddicussion concerts on June 7.

Gary France and DRUMatiX plus the ANU African Ensemble will perform in the Belconnen Theatre on June 6 at 7.30pm; bookings 6125 5491.