



MARCUS PERROZZI

By Gary France Photos by Daniel Desmarais

Marcus Perrozzi has been playing percussion for the past eighteen years and is currently on tour with Dralion by Cirque du Soleil. He graduated from W.A.A.P.A. in 2004 with a Bachelor of Performing Arts (Music) degree. Marcus was a core member of Tetrafade Percussion from 2007-2010, creatively contributing to the annual Tetrafade Young Artists program as well as the Musica Viva In Schools program, corporate events and international touring. During his career, he has performed alongside a diverse range of artists, some of which include Andrea Bocelli, Scrap Arts Music (Canada), Tokyo Inter Arts, Danza Viva Spanish Dance Company, Taiko no Wa, the W.A. Symphony Orchestra,

the Australian Youth Orchestra, Steve Schick, Michael Askill, Greg Sheehan, Taal Naan, Hayley Westenra, Pascale, Tea for Two, Them Little Secrets, Bent Knee Creative and the Greg Schultz Big Band. He has also studied with Tim White, TaikOz, Deanna Blacher, Timo Lozano, Antonio Vargas (Strictly Ballroom), Zoltán Rácz (Amadinda) and Wency D'Souza. Marcus has recorded and broadcast for ABC Classic FM and local artists including Them Little Secrets debut album 'She Loves Love'. Marcus has composed and choreographed a variety of percussion and dance works. In 2008 he was commissioned by the Defying Gravity Percussion Ensemble at W.A.A.P.A. to compose a new work for large Taiko ensemble ('Vesuvius'). His most recent work was featured in the 2014 W.A.A.P.A. Dance student works season 'RAW' at the Dolphin Theatre, U.W.A. This was a dance ensemble work called 'V', created and choreographed by his brother Alexander Perrozzi, which will soon be turned into a short dance film. Other works include traditional Flamenco styles for the Danza Viva Spanish Dance Company and a diverse range of contemporary percussion works. Marcus has a particular interest in exploring new ways of combining elements of Tap dancing with body percussion.

He has toured extensively throughout the world including North and South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and of course Australia; particularly with Cirque du Soleil, Tetrafade Percussion, the Australian Youth Orchestra and the W.A. Youth Orchestra. His musical theatre credits (either performing on stage or playing in the pit) include Les Miserables, Fame, The Witches of Eastwick, Beauty & The Beast, Fiddler on the Roof, Oliver, Annie, High Society and Sheerluck Holmes. Marcus has been the recipient of numerous awards including the W.A.A.P.A.'s Winstanley Prize for the most outstanding student of 2004, and also the 2006 W.A. Youth Music/ArtsWA. Scholarship. This allowed him to spend the first half of 2007 in Sydney studying with TaikOz, Australia's premiere Japanese drumming ensemble. Marcus is also a trained theatrical dancer and has performed and taught across many disciplines including Singing, Jazz, Tap, Funk Tap, Classical Ballet, Acrobatics, Modelling, Speech & Drama and Spanish dancing. Theatrical Performing Arts Studio has been the family business in since the year he was born, and 31 years later it's still going strong! In 2007, Marcus studied Tap dancing with Nathan Sheens (Tap Dogs) and Tracey Wilson (London's West End) at Sydney Dance Co. Marcus is also a foundation committee member for the ON STAGE Performing Arts Competitions held in W.A. every April and October school holidays.

How did you become interested in Percussion and can you please tell me about your studies?

I come from a musical family - my mum played piano, my dad the drums, my sister the sax and my brother the trumpet. I was learning the clarinet during my final 2 years of primary school and it was my intention to transfer to the saxophone once I got to high school. However, as I neared this transition, for some reason I just knew I had to play the drums. So my primary music teacher loaned me her husband's old drum set and I began trying to learn a few beats... open-hand style (without knowing what I was doing)... this was the beginning! I began my percussion studies when I was 12 years old, at Woodvale Senior High School, learning with Nikki Turner and Robyn Gray (Sarti). Following 5 years of lessons and playing percussion and drums in the school concert bands and jazz bands, I went onto university to study a Bachelor of Performing Arts (Music) with Tim White at ECU@WAAPA's Classical Music Department. Following my recital, I was awarded the Winstanley Prize for the most

outstanding graduating student of 2004. During my time here I played with the Defying Gravity Percussion ensemble and the university & WAYO (WAYMA) orchestras and concert bands (including a tour to Europe), as well as an AYO season, National Band Camp and Percussion Master Course with TaikOz. I also took part in the 2003 National Percussion Symposium at the ANU in Canberra (directed by Gary France) as well as the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games International Youth Masterclass in Percussion (directed by Peter Neville).

Following my experience with TaikOz, I fell in love with taiko drumming and won the 2006 WA Youth Music/ArtsWA Scholarship that enabled me to pursue 6 months full-time study at their Ultimo Dojo in 2007. Afterwards, I went back to university and did a post-graduate Diploma of Education (Secondary) in Music & Drama with Dr. Geoffrey Lowe. Aside from formal institutional studies, I've taken hand-drumming lessons with master percussionist Wency D'Souza, cajon lessons with the 'King of the Bulerias' Timo Lozano and castanet lessons with virtuoso Deanna Blacher.

I am also a trained theatrical dancer, having grown up in my mum's dance school 'Theatrical Performing Arts Studio'. It was here where I particularly flourished in tapping and flamenco. My love for tap dancing led me to explore and develop my own styles of funk tap and body percussion, teaching dance students and percussionists alike. Following years of studying flamenco dance at the Danza Viva Spanish Dance Academy, my teacher Deanna Blacher asked me to play a solo snare drum for a dance piece... this then led to my studies on the cajon and performing with the Danza Viva Spanish Dance Company and other flamenco groups in Perth for a number of years.

You have performed with numerous renowned artists both live and on recordings. Can you please tell me about some of your highlights?

Tetrafade Percussion - World Expo in Shanghai, China 2010. Unless you've been to a World Expo, you can only imagine at how jam-packed the venues are with crowds flowing through the pavilions, getting a glimpse at the many cultures represented at these events. We were playing 3 shows a day for 6 days running. What I really enjoyed about this experience is that you can go from finishing your gig in the Australian pavilion and then head next door to see a world-class performance of music and dance at the Malaysian pavilion; then head to the Canadian pavilion to see a contemporary performance on electronic violin; then off to the Chinese pavilion to see traditional circus arts, etc... it really is a feast where anything and everything is on the menu!

Tetrafade Percussion - 'Spice' show 2009, directed by Josh Hogan and performed with tabla virtuoso Vicki Ramakrishnan & the Indian Temple of Fine Arts dancers.

This was a great learning and performing experience for me, studying Konnakol (vocal time rhythms) with Josh Hogan and then applying these intricate rhythms to tap dancing alongside traditional Indian dancers and musicians.

Them Little Secrets (Latiesha Boucher & Fiona Rea - original singer-songwriter duo, Perth). I've performed live and recorded percussion for these

talented storytellers on their debut album 'She Loves Love'. They won the 'Most Popular Song' category with 'Take Me Home' in the 2010 WAMI Song of the Year competition.

With regards to other recordings, aside from a number of live broadcasts with orchestras and ensembles particularly for ABC Classic FM, as well as demos for a number of up-and-coming Perth singer-songwriters, I've actually spent more time lately recording other people for my own compositions and projects rather than being recorded myself!

Can you please describe your percussion set up, does it vary for different ensembles you work with?

My percussion set-up definitely varies, depending on the style of the music, the space and ultimately the demands of the gig. Whether it's playing covers for corporate events in the Greg Schultz Big Band, or cajon & percussion for the Danza Viva Dance Company; a hybrid percussion-kit for original Perth singer-songwriters Them Little Secrets or contemporary percussion in Tetrafade Percussion; recording drum kit and percussion tracks on demos for local up & coming artists or recording for my own compositions - percussion allows for so many wild and wonderful possibilities. Sometimes it's simply only one instrument, while other gigs require the imagination to construct visually interesting yet musically functional structures.

My current show - 'Dralion' by Cirque du Soleil - uses a set-up which I've contributed to the creation of, while at the same time following parameters set due to the rigorous touring schedule of the 'arena' tour. This has led to the set-up being locked down into a 2-part road case, with drums, toys, cymbals and microphones all mounted onto 3 racks. This allows for a rather speedy load out at the end of a city; essentially tuning down a few conga and djembe heads, putting covers on others and a few toys away... which then leads to separating the two bases and clamping the lids on, ready to be rolled out to one of the 18 semi-trailers used to move the show from city to city. (Please see attached diagram)

Do you feel different in the recording studio versus live performance?

Absolutely! My experience in live performance outweighs that of a recording studio quite considerably. While I enjoy the process and results of recording, I would say this essentially boils down to the fact that I'm a performer who feeds off the audience and their response. I enjoy the instant satisfaction in the moment. Whether they're a loud and wildly involved and positively reactive audience or reserved and quiet, I respect and am grateful for the opportunity I have to share my love for percussion and music with a live audience of any scale - from small intimate bars to the grand concert halls and expansive arenas.

In the recording studio however, I get a different sense. While it depends on the line-up of players (solo tracking or ensemble recording) and of course the instruments & style of music, I definitely get a different sensation. I wouldn't say there's any difference in what you aim to put out, but I suppose it's the commonly known fact that a recording is forever, so there's a sense of 'perfection' expected yet while trying to maintain the essence and freshness of the music. For me it's about relying on your inner energy to bring the music to life. To let it speak in a recording. Performing for the person behind the desk who's controlling the 'record' button. It's a different response, a different relationship with your 'audience'. They're likely and often expected to be more critical, but ultimately as a result of the circumstances. The recording studio is a much more controlled environment, compared to the 'unknown' factor of a live performance. I'm not saying it's a bad thing, but it is different. A different challenge with a different response... at least in the immediate term.

What current projects and tours are you working on at the moment?

Currently I'm on tour with 'Dralion' by Cirque du Soleil. I am the Percussionist - for 90% of the show I get to play in the pit on my percussion set-up, and then feature on stage in the skipping finale act on 3 large custom-made taiko drums as the 'Bamboo King' (where I get to wear a special costume and make-up which takes on average 1 hour to apply before a show). I am also an Artist Coach for the taiko act. This involves teaching and training acrobats and non-musicians from different cultures (including China, Japan, Spain, Ukraine, Belarus & Russia) to play the taiko drums, as well as maintenance of the drums so that they're always show-ready.

This gig is literally a dream come true! It was early in my percussion studies... I was 15 years old (year 10 at high school) when Cirque du Soleil's flagship production 'Saltimbanco' came to Perth in the Grand Chapiteau (Big Top) in 1999. After seeing my first 'all-human/no-animal' circus performance, I knew this is the gig for me! Totally captivated by the music and mesmerized by



the technical and theatrical qualities of the Cirque du Soleil formula, this has been a dream 10 years in the making. Is this a result of the Law of Attraction or just luck? Either way, I'm very fortunate to have had this experience and to have performed with some great musicians from all over the world!

I joined the tour in Montreal, Canada in August 2010 for the remount of the production in the arena format. To date, I recently passed my 4-year anniversary with Cirque du Soleil, which has seen me perform 'Dralion' over 1000 times, in 139 cities, in 24 countries, across 5 continents, to millions of spectators. I've been very fortunate to see a lot of the world in such a short amount of time and of course have been to places I probably would've never imagined seeing in my lifetime - places like Russia, South Africa, the Middle East and central America, to name a few.

In the show, we have live music featuring a 6-piece band and two singers. The line up is drums, percussion, keys 1 (band leader), keys 2/bass guitar, guitars and violin; female voice and male counter tenor voice. Violine Corradi's score features a wide range of styles from 80s rock ballad, to flamenco, middle-eastern, orchestral, pop, Latin, Asian, African and electronic-fusion... quite a varied mix! Naturally, this calls upon many different percussive skills on a wide variety of instruments. An enjoyable challenge indeed.

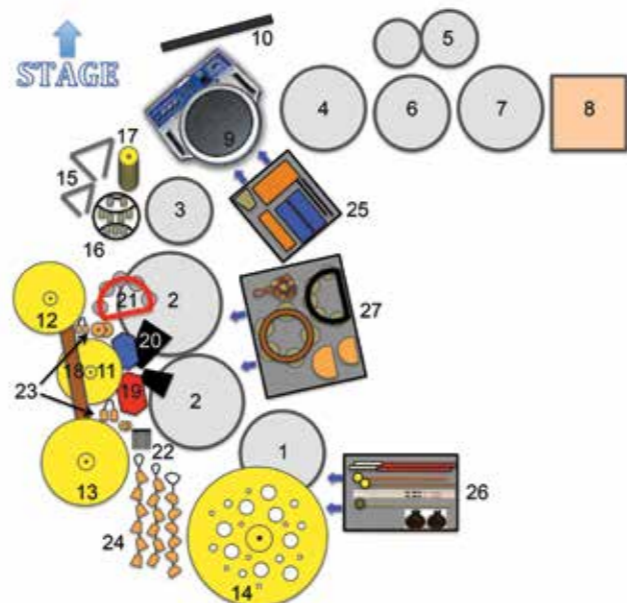
As for other projects, I've actually been working closely with my brother Alexander Perrozzi who is currently completing his degree in Dance at WAAPA@ECU Mt Lawley. Something that being on tour has allowed me is an opportunity learn and develop new skills, particularly from those other talented people around me. So I've been diving into the world of recording and MIDI compositions, creating works for dance and circus acts. I've just recently completed a 15-minute, 4-movement work called 'V' for dance ensemble, choreographed by Alexander Perrozzi. This work has just been performed in the 2014 WAAPA Dance student works season 'RAW' at the Dolphin Theatre, UWA, and will soon be turned into a short dance film. While I have been composing particularly a wide range of percussion works for a number of years now, the skills and experience I've gained while being on tour with Cirque du Soleil has allowed me to take my creative and production desires to a new

level. I currently have a number of international solo circus acts I'm composing and producing the music for and I intend to continue to create new works for performing artists across many genres in the future.

Want to catch up with Marcus on the road?

Email him: marcus.perrozzi@gmail.com

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