



**WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF
PERFORMING ARTS**

W.A. CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC

PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

Gary France Director

1991 WINTER CONCERT

Tuesday 28 May

1:15 pm

MUSIC AUDITORIUM

*2 Bradford Street
Mount Lawley WA 6050*

PROGRAMME

Three African Dances

Ewe and Dagomba Provinces, Akan Community of
Ghana, West Africa

Asaadua

Atsiabeko

Gahu

Canticle No. 1

Lou Harrison 1938

Ritmica No. 6

Amadeo Roldan 1930

Dill Pickles

Charles L. Johnson 1906

Ku-Ka-Ilimoku

Christopher Rouse 1978

PROGRAMME NOTES

Three African Dances

The most apparent difference between African and Western traditional music is the rhythmic texture. In African music at least two different rhythms are played simultaneously as opposed to Western music's historic attention to sub division. Today's three dances are from a very small part of Africa where the tradition of drumming and dance is well documented. While in America, Mr France had the great honour to study Ewe drumming with master drummer Abraham Adzina. This semester the W.A. Conservatorium Percussion Ensemble have been exploring these rhythms and focusing on the connection between African Music and the Afro-American artform called Jazz. The most dominant rhythmic device used in **Asaadua** and **Atsiabeko** is the 3/2 relationship. Mr France will introduce each player's rhythm on a dagomba instrument called *dondon* (talking drum). The Third dance, **Gahu**, focuses on the call and response relationship in Ewe Drumming. One must also keep in mind that each of these compositions is usually quite long, even hours, and is always accompanied by dance.

Canticle No. 1

American composer, Lou Harrison, first leapt to prominence in the early 1950's when he received glowing praise from Stravinsky for his vocal work *Rapunsel*. His early music, much influenced by his studies with Schoenberg and Cowell, was noteworthy for its keen exploration of percussion, and in this context he shared interests with John Cage. During the 60's his growing commitment to the causes of human rights and personal freedom and his general dissatisfaction with the state of American society, led him to make systematic studies of the music of a number of non-Western cultures: Korean court music, Chinese classical music, and Indonesian Gamelan music. *Canticle No 1* pre dates his *Concerto for Violin & Percussion Orchestra* by some 30 years. This early work examines through timbre and structure percussion writing in an innovative way for the period. In *Canticle No 1* Harrison draws on his eastern influence through the use of Chinese instrumentation: temple gongs and nipple gongs, and cymbals. Harrison also foreshadows some of his later works in his use of thunder sheet, terra cotta flower pots, and bells. This orchestration reflects Harrison's early relationship with John Cage and the Pacific group of composers as well as the establishment of "utility music". In addition to exploiting a fascinating palette of percussion sounds the work makes use of fugal and contrapuntal techniques.

Ritmica No. 6

Born in Paris, 1900, Amadeo Roldàn graduated violin at the Conservatory in Madrid, graduating in 1916, and composition with del Campo and Pedro Sanjuán. He settled in Cuba in 1921 where he lived until his death in 1939. During his brief time in Havana, Roldàn led a rather illustrious career. He was Music Director of the Havana Philharmonic Orchestra (1932) and professor of composition at the Havana Conservatory from 1935 until his death. Roldàn's interest in contemporary music led to the formation of the Havana String Quartet (1927), a contemporary string ensemble. A suite from Roldàn's ballet *La Rembambaramba* requiring six separate groups of percussion instruments was performed in Havana in 1928.

Ritmica Nos. 1-4 were composed in 1928 for wind quintet and piano. Ritmica No 5 and 6 were composed in 1930 and are believed to be among the first western works for percussion ensemble. Pre-dating *Ionisation* by one year there are striking similarities in the composers use of densities and aggregates of sound; However the most striking difference is Roldàn's use and reverence of the folkloric traditions of the music of Africa and Cuba. This Afro-Cuban tradition manifests itself in the son clavè, the 3:2 rhythm (pulse). Like *Ionisation*, Ritmica No 6 is a highly multimeteric work rich in polyrhythms.

Dill Pickles

Popular Ragtime 1906 - 1912 is typified by Charles L. Johnson's Dill Pickles Rag, (1906) which was the next big hit after Joplin's Maple Leaf Rag. Dill Pickles was the first Tin Pan Alley million selling hit; it established the form for most rags that followed. Today's performance was arranged by xylophone virtuoso Bob Becker. It sets the precedent for having three rather than four strains, and for the use of the three-over four pattern. Included in the marimba accompaniment are sustained counter melodies which were not possible in the solo piano versions.

Ku-Ka-Ilimoku

Ku-Ka-Ilimoku is an incarnation of the Hawaiian god Ku as the god of war, and the piece is a kind of war dance made out of a counterpoint of cross accents. The percussion quartet play a wide variety of instruments, including log drums, conga, bongo, boo bams, and assorted other metal and skin instruments. Rouse specifies 12 different kinds of sticks or mallets. Ku-Ka-Ilimoku was commissioned by the Syracuse Symphony Percussion ensemble and has become a favourite quartet for percussionist world wide. I was present at the World Premier in 1978 and remember the profound effect this new work had on me as I listened to the powerful cross rhythms and ritualistic pulse.

Christopher Rouse, born 1949, studied composition with Karel Husa, Robert Palmer, and George Crumb. He has been on the faculty of the University of Michigan, and the Eastman School of Music. He has been composer in residence for the Baltimore Symphony, and his works are performed world wide. Mr Rouse is also a rock and roll historian.

GARY DOUGLAS FRANCE

Gary is a Native of Syracuse New York, U.S.A. Mr France performs in both the Classical and Jazz genres. He received his Bachelor degree in Music Education, in 1979, from the State University of New York. He completed his Masters degree in Performance in 1987 at North Texas State University where he became the first drummer to direct one of the prestigious Jazz lab Bands. Gary has performed with many Jazz Greats including James Morrison, Richie Cole, Nat Adderly, Mark Murphey, Frank Sinatra Jr., Ricky May, Jim McNeeley, Urbie Green, Clifford Jordon and Theresa Brewer. Mr France has performed many world and national premiers including Peter Brook's La Tragedie de Carmen and Sir Michael Tippett's New Years Suite with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra. Gary has performed in The Peoples Republic of China (1986), India, for Musica Viva (1989), Australia and New Zealand (1987), for Yamaha International, and the United States 59 City tour Clyde Beatty International Circus.

**Western Australian Conservatorium of Music Percussion
Ensemble**

The Western Australian Conservatorium of Music, Percussion Ensemble forms ensembles of between 4 and 15 players. Students from both jazz and classical studies combine to explore, workshop, and perform percussion literature and world musics .

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