

Chapter 1

This introductory chapter briefly describes the rationale for the thesis, lists the hypotheses, indicates the research methodology employed for each hypothesis, defines the scope and limitations of the thesis and outlines the chapter structure.

Rationale

The exploration by composers this century of timbral, textural and rhythmic aspects of music and the search for new timbres, and timbre combinations has given percussion groups, orchestral percussion sections and individual performers a new prominence in concert music. In post-Second World War music virtuosic percussion performers have emerged and the role of the percussionist has been elevated from an ornamental and supportive one (in the context of chamber or orchestral groupings) to where percussion soloists and percussion sections are prime carriers of musical thought in sections of musical works or even for whole compositions.

In Australia, over the past two decades, the pioneer contemporary percussion ensemble has been the Synergy percussion ensemble. The rationale for this thesis is to identify its influence, both direct and indirect, on Australian composers. This influence can be seen in terms of an expansion of repertoire which, in certain instances, has promoted significant experimentation in complexities of timbre, rhythm and texture. Allied to the expansion of the percussion repertoire and the increased importance of percussion has been the trend in Australia to incorporate non-Western (European) sounds and concepts

into new works. In particular, influences from Asia, including melodic, timbral and rhythmic concepts have been incorporated.

This thesis charts the emergence and growth of an Australian percussion music repertoire and provides an extensive register of Australian contemporary compositions featuring percussion.

With the emergence of the dedicated percussion ensemble a particular type of composer/ performer interplay has developed, which requires investigation. The opportunities provided by a concentration on percussion have influenced compositional aspects. Some study of these aspects is required since percussion composition in Australia has received very little attention from music researchers.

Hypotheses

A number of hypotheses are tested in this thesis. These are:

1. Prior to 1979 (the year of the first commissions specifically for percussion quartet) there was no significant percussion ensemble repertoire in Australia.
2. This repertoire has expanded rapidly, primarily as a response to the development of Synergy ensemble.
3. Simultaneously with the acceptance of Synergy
 - (a) certain composers were given greater opportunity to incorporate into their compositions a wider range of timbres and concepts; and
 - (b) Australian composers further explored timbral and polyrhythmic possibilities inherent in the percussion ensemble.

Methodology

Hypothesis 1

In order to demonstrate there was a limited percussion music repertoire prior to 1979 in Australia, a review of the literature including books on Australian composers and catalogues of Australian compositions, was undertaken. Results of the literary review are presented at the end of Chapter 2, with the tabling of a more extensive register of Australian compositions featuring percussion than hitherto had been available. The compilation of this register was initiated by a list of such compositions (provided by the Australian Music Centre) which had previously been published in the journal *Percussive Notes*, April 1991 (NY, USA). However, this list was substantially incomplete, and only listed works written up until 1988. The additional works listed in the register were gathered from programme notes (provided by percussion ensembles and the Australian Music Centre), commissioning documentation (provided by the Australia Council), books and articles on Australian composers, listings with the Australian Music Centre, recordings, and various interviews conducted by the writer of this thesis.

Hypothesis 2

In order to assemble data relating to the expansion of the percussion repertoire and the development of Synergy, a series of unstructured interviews were made with professionals in the field. The individual members of Synergy were interviewed in order to establish an historical perspective of the ensemble as well as determining repertoire, influences and funding details. In addition the interviews were used to determine any factors affecting the long-term existence of the ensemble and the development of an Australian percussion music.

A schedule of the people interviewed and their positions is shown in Table 1. The dates and places of these interviews are shown in italics.

Table 1

Graham Hair	-	Composer/Gardinier Professor Glasgow University <i>Melbourne, 2 July 1992</i>
Keith Humble	-	Composer/Emeritus Professor of Music La Trobe University <i>Melbourne, 6 July 1992</i>
Bozidar Kos	-	Composer/Lecturer Sydney Conservatorium of Music <i>Sydney, 20 January 1992</i>
Graeme Leak	-	Percussionist/Lecturer La Trobe University <i>Melbourne, 27 January 1992</i>
Peter Neville	-	Percussionist Elision Ensemble, Melbourne <i>Melbourne, 29 January 1992</i>
Ryszard Pusz	-	Percussionist/Teacher TAFE - Adelaide <i>Melbourne, 2 July 1992</i>
Barry Quinn	-	Percussionist <i>Melbourne, 30 January 1992</i>
Paul Sarcich	-	Percussionist/Lecturer Victorian College of Arts <i>Melbourne, 31 January 1992</i>
Peter Sculthorpe	-	Composer/Professor of Music University of Sydney <i>Sydney, 22 January 1992</i>
Carl Vine	-	Composer <i>Sydney, 20 January 1992</i>
I.Wayan Rai S.	-	Percussionist/Lecturer University of Bali <i>Bali, 9 October 1991</i>
Martin Wesley-Smith	-	Composer/Senior Lecturer Sydney Conservatorium of Music <i>Sydney, 2 July 1992</i>

Nigel Westlake

Composer
Sydney, 23 August 1991

Documentation provided by Synergy members resulted in the compilation of a log of all performances by Synergy. This log is presented as Appendix II and includes the repertoire performed.

In the body of Chapter 3, Tables are compiled of commissions by all bodies for compositions featuring percussion. The first of these tables is of all composers commissioned by Synergy; the others are of commissions by all other bodies; and of uncommissioned works performed by Synergy (a list of uncommissioned works by other ensembles is beyond the scope of this thesis, such works appear in the Register below).

Documentation for the above lists was provided by the Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council. This documentation included information on all compositions commissioned between 1973 and 1993 (including works for instrumentations other than percussion). The list of uncommissioned works was compiled by comparative analyses of Synergy's repertoire and documentation from the Australia Council, as well as information gathered as a result of interviews with composers and Synergy members.

The Register of Australian Compositions featuring Percussion serves as reference to the expansion of the percussion ensemble repertoire.

Hypothesis 3 (a)

In order to establish the significance of Synergy and other ensembles featuring percussion on composers, the various interviews included questions

regarding the interplay between percussionists and composers. The data obtained provided insight into the opportunity for composers to explore sounds (through extended choice of instruments) and compositional techniques for the percussion ensemble.

Research in the course of this thesis did not reveal any published material specifically on the influences of non-Western (European) musics or the percussionist/percussion ensemble on Australian composers. However, *Australian Contemporary Composers* by James Murdoch (Macmillan Co., 1972) as well as articles, essays and interviews by other writers provided further data.

Hypothesis 3 (b)

Combined with the methodology of Hypothesis 3(a), selected Australian works were analysed, making particular reference to timbral and rhythmic concepts and techniques.

Works selected for analysis were chosen on the basis of their popularity with members of Synergy. On 29/1/93 (Sydney) Synergy members were asked to list their favourite works from the Australian repertoire. Those works common to each selection were chosen for analysis. These works were:

- *Quasar* (Bozidar Kos)
- *Defying Gravity* (Carl Vine)
- *Reflections* (Ross Edwards)
- *Omphalo Centric Lecture* (Nigel Westlake)
- *The Speed of Sound* (Michael Smetanin)
- *How the Stars Were Made* (Peter Sculthorpe)

Scope and Limitations

This thesis has focused on music of the twentieth century. Only musicians or composers of this century are included. Further, any reference to composers or musicians is in conjunction with their association with, and the furthering of, percussion music.

The research undertaken to establish a register of Australian compositions featuring percussion is limited to music of the twentieth century and in the tradition of Western European art music. It is also limited by the resources of information as noted in Methodology - Hypothesis 1 above. Further, in compiling this Register of Australian Percussion Music, compositions by West Australian composers may not be listed. Contact was made with David Pye, artistic director of Nova (see below), requesting information re commissions to Australian composers and other performance aspects. Unfortunately, this information was not forthcoming. This limitation on information also affects the completeness of lists of commissions by Australian percussion ensembles.

In compiling comparative information on the amount of commissions instigated by Synergy or others, documentation from the Australia Council was reviewed. As the Australia Council is not able to provide detailed accounts of grants and commissions prior to 1973 the scope of this thesis with regard to commissions is so limited. Further, the available documentation, prior to 1978 does not identify the commissioning body or include any description of the composition (ie. whether or not percussion was included). However, a review of publications on Australian composers and other methodology identified in dealing with Hypothesis 1, reveals that comparatively few compositions featuring percussion were written before 1978. The documentation from Australia Council is

therefore a sufficiently comprehensive guide to the origin of Australian percussion music commissions.

Other exclusions from lists of reference are works written by students for special training situations, unperformed works, or works not listed by established composers with the Australian Music Centre. It is also possible that some works which do not fall under the category 'other exclusions' may not have been documented with any of the various sources scrutinized for this thesis.

In looking at the interplay between composers and performers the scope has been limited to exclude all but the interplay by composers with contemporary Australian percussionists. As well, the review of non-Western (European) influences on compositional content is limited to works by Australian composers who have featured percussion in their work. In turn, this review, and the interplay mentioned above, is limited by available literature and resources identified under Methodology - Hypothesis 3(b).

There has been no attempt in this thesis to identify an Australian compositional style of writing for percussion ensembles. Inclusion of the musical analysis of a few works will show some techniques and concepts in practice. The inclusion of these analyses will show exploration of timbral and rhythmic concepts (and to a lesser extent pitch organization), by a few Australian composers. These composers and particular compositions feature regularly in Synergy performances.

Chapter 2

An Australian Perspective

The first hypothesis posits that prior to 1979 few works existed in the Australian percussion music repertoire. To support this claim, this chapter looks briefly at the historical perspective of Australian percussion music as well as presenting an extensive register of compositions in this area (within the Scope and Limitations referred to above).

A pioneer among Australian composers in the field of percussion writing was Percy Grainger:

The Warriors (1919) is an excellent example of Grainger's use of 'tuneful percussion' instruments, his interest in which can be traced back to his first hearing of an Indonesian gamelan orchestra (at the Paris Exposition of 1900). This same experience, it will be recalled, inspired Debussy to write Pagodes in Estampes, and in 1928 Grainger arranged this piece for gamelan-like tuned orchestral percussion and keyboard instruments.¹

Of those composers who neglected the wide range of percussion instruments he wrote in 1929:

And what are we to think of the lack of vision, lack of innate musicality shown by 'highbrow' composers and conductors in their neglect of the exquisite 'tuneful percussion' instruments invented and perfected in America and elsewhere during the last 30 or 40 years - metal and wooden marimba, staff bells, vibraphones, nabimbabs, dulcitone etc.

Grainger wrote this as part of the forward to Jutish Melody Danish Suite. He goes on to comment that there may be many 'classicists' who probably consider these mellow and delicate toned instruments too 'low brow' to be

admitted into the holy precincts of the symphony orchestra. In this connection he notes that it's only the most harsh-toned tuneful percussion instruments (glockenspiel, xylophone, tubular chimes) that have found a place in the symphony orchestra thus far, along with the ever-lasting thumping of kettle-drums. Grainger recommends every orchestra should sport at least 20 such players; 2 on 1 glockenspiel, 4 on 1 metal marimba, 2 on 1 xylophone, 4 on 1 wooden marimba, 4 or more 1 staff bells, 2 on 1 tubular chimes, 1 on celesta, 1 on dulcitone, and suggests that to use, orchestrally a glockenspiel without a metal marimba, a xylophone without a wooden marimba, is just as absurd and incomplete as it would be to use piccolo without flute, violins without lower strings or two higher octaves of the piano without lower octaves.²

John Antill's *Corroboree* first heard in 1946, is perhaps the first identifiable Australian work for orchestra with an Australian character.³ It is a rhythmically dynamic work and includes the use of Aboriginal bullroarer and thora sticks. Although not native to Australia the inclusion of Chinese temple blocks, castanets, ratchet and sleigh bells brought to prominence the percussion section and the resultant variety of timbres. *Corroboree* is generally recognized as a significant work by Antill,⁴ and is a milestone in the use and development of percussion in Australia.

Peggy Glanville-Hicks was another early pioneer of non-European musical influences and the elevation of the percussion section to equal status with other orchestral sections:

....my revision in materials and structural principle initiated in turn a revision in orchestral layout, my basic ensemble becoming a body of three choirs - strings, winds and percussion, the last of these acquiring equal status with the others as an organic factor, not merely a decorative garnish.⁵

Sonata for Piano and Percussion (piano and 5 percussionists), written in 1951, is a good example of the importance of percussion in Glanville-Hicks' compositional method. This work was performed again in 1981 by Synergy at the S. H. Ervin Museum Observatory Hill, Sydney.

In 1969 Barry Conyngham wrote *Three* for two percussion set-ups and string quartet. *Three* explores spatial concepts where the two percussion units are placed far-left and far-right with the string quartet centre-back. According to Murdoch (1975), this is the first work by Conyngham which clearly reaches out to Asian music.⁶

The mainstream of compositions featuring percussion did not begin in Australia until the 1970s. Percussion ensembles formed even later in the 1970s. A precursor to events in Australia was the Ensemble of the American Centre (based in Paris during the 1960s) consisting of Soprano, Piano and 3 Percussion. It was for this ensemble that Don Banks wrote *Tirade* to a text by fellow Australian, Peter Porter in 1968, and it was the tour to London by this ensemble and their remarkable singer, Jo Nendick, that inspired Graham Hair to write *Creation* (1972) for Soprano and 6 Percussion.⁷ In *Tirade*, a great deal of importance is given to untuned percussion, a foot-controlled electronic siren (used by the pianist), and controlled improvisation of fingers and knuckles on wood, skins and the sides of instruments.

In 1970 Richard Meale wrote *Interiors/Exteriors* for two pianos and three percussion. In 1971 Meale's *Incredible Floridas* (for piano, flute, clarinet, violin, cello and percussion) was singled out for international acclaim by critics at the I.S.C.M. Festival in London.⁸

In the 1970s a number of works were commissioned from Australian composers by the touring six member ensemble Les Percussions de Strasbourg. These include Peter Sculthorpe's *How the Stars Were Made* (1971), Barry Conyngham's *Six* (1971) and Moya Henderson's *Alanbiq* (1977). Two of these, *How the Stars Were Made* and *Alanbiq* were later arranged for the four percussion combination of Synergy (the former by Michael Askill in 1979 and the latter by Henderson herself in 1985). The original version of Conyngham's *Six* for the six solo percussionists, orchestral wind and percussion instruments, was adjusted in the same year to be performed by the six soloists of Les Percussions de Strasbourg with six strings. This second version enabled the piece to be programmed with another work in the repertoire of this international group.⁹

Les Percussions de Strasbourg pre-empted (and encouraged) Australian percussion ensembles such as Synergy, and those put together by Adelaide's Ryszard Pusz. The Australian tour in 1978 by Les Percussions de Strasbourg was significant in the way it enthused the young Australian percussionists.¹⁰

In the early 1970s a number of works featuring percussion were written by Australians, notably Anne Boyd, Felix Werder and Keith Humble. In 1970, while a doctoral student at York University, Boyd wrote *The Voice of the Phoenix* for solo amplified piano, guitar, harp, harpsichord, ten percussion, extended woodwind and analog synthesizer. Werder's *Percussion Play* for solo percussion, *Tetract* for viola, oboe and percussion and *Scherzi* for bass trumpet and percussion were written in 1972. These were then followed by his *Oscussion* for synthesizer and percussion (1973) and *J & J* for clarinet and percussion (1975). In 1970, following his return from France, Keith Humble collaborated with French percussionist Jean Charles Françoise. According to Humble:

Percussion featured in most of my compositions for contemporary music chamber ensembles particularly from a timbral point of view.¹¹

In 1975 George Gaber (percussion Professor at Indiana University, Bloomington) toured Australia. He presented the Chavez *Toccata* (1942), as well as a number of other pieces, to Australian audiences. To Ryszard Pusz (at least) this was a milestone in awareness of contemporary percussion music. Pusz later studied with Gaber.¹² Rebecca Lagos (Synergy) was also to study with Gaber. However, in 1975 she was unaware of his Australian tour.¹³

Notwithstanding the works by Humble, Hair, Sculthorpe and others, activities for percussion ensemble (both compositions and performances) did not start in earnest until the late 1970s.

Until the late 1970s Richard Smith was the leading teacher of percussion in Australia (based in Adelaide). Many orchestral positions around Australia were filled by his students. As a teacher Smith was primarily interested in the 'classical' orchestral repertoire¹⁴ so little training was available for contemporary music in percussion. Furthermore, even in the mid-1970s according to Ryszard Pusz, "one couldn't buy any works for percussion in Australia."¹⁵

Of course, with some effort, scores could have been ordered from overseas publishers but according to Pusz, not many students would have considered ordering unseen and unheard scores. Thus, the development of contemporary percussion was probably hampered by this situation.

Most of the percussion repertoire in the early and mid-1970s consisted of arrangements of rags, jazz and popular music pieces with novelty value.¹⁶ Again, according to Pusz, there was a need to commission composers,

especially to develop repertoire for untuned percussion which was still held in low esteem even by some percussionists. Richard Smith, for example, often referred to untuned percussion as 'effects'.¹⁷

In Adelaide during the late 1970s Ryszard Pusz was (and still is) chairman of the percussion faculty at Adelaide College of TAFE. Of the works performed by Pusz' ensemble (formed in 1978) there were three Australian works which Pusz considers significant. They were Bozidar Kos' *Quartet* (1980) for flute, viola, piano and percussion; *Suite for Percussion Quintet* (1980), a jazz-influenced piece by Eric Bryce which proved popular with American and European audiences; and *Loss* (1982) by David Morgan, a composer who was to have a long association with Pusz.

In 1979 a group of virtuosi formed an ensemble in Melbourne called Flederman. Whilst not a percussion ensemble as such, Flederman featured percussion as an integral part of the ensemble and repertoire. The percussionist was Graeme Leak. Flederman toured Australia extensively during the ensuing nine years playing an enormous amount of 'new music' including many first Australian performances of standard and newly-composed avant garde pieces.

Activities by percussion ensembles in Australia has been very regionalized, with the formation of groups in Melbourne by Barry Quinn, (during the late 1970s and 1980s) in Adelaide by Ryszard Pusz (1978), Nova in Perth (1988) and Synergy (1974) in Sydney. National touring by Synergy didn't commence until after international concerts, such as Paris in 1989 and the United Kingdom (1990).

Nevertheless, a repertoire of Australian percussion music had begun. The formation of Synergy and subsequently Adelaide Percussion and other

groups featuring percussion, instigated what may be said to be a repertoire of Australian percussion music.

A register of this repertoire follows, and can be seen to support Hypothesis 1. The statistical support for this data can be found under Methodology.

Table 2

Register of Australian Percussion Music: a chronology to 1993

1951 -	Sonata for Piano and Percussion , by Peggy Glanville-Hicks. For piano and 5 percussion.
1960 -	Sonata for Viola and Percussion , by Peter Sculthorpe.
1961 -	Irkanda IV , by Peter Sculthorpe. For solo violin, percussion and string orchestra.
1963 -	Skiagram , by Helen Gifford. For flute, viola and vibraphone.
1966 -	Sun Music for Voices and Percussion , by Peter Sculthorpe. For SATB.
1969 -	Three , by Barry Conyngham. For percussion and string quartet, chorus, piano and percussion.
1970 -	Interiors/Exteriors , by Richard Meale. For 2 pianos, percussion trio.
1971 -	Six , by Barry Conyngham. For six solo percussion, orchestral wind and percussion.
1971 -	How the Stars Were Made , by Peter Sculthorpe. For percussion sextet.
1972 -	Tetract , by Felix Werder. For viola, oboe and percussion.
1972 -	Percussion Play , by Felix Werder. For solo percussion.
1972 -	Scherzi , by Felix Werder for bass trumpet and percussion.
1973 -	Oscussion , by Felix Werder for synthesizer and percussion.
1973 -	Meridian , by David Lumsdaine. For piano, percussion and pre-recorded tape.
1973 -	Facade , by Carl Vine. For solo percussion
1974 -	Kundalini , by Larry Sitsky. Concerto for trombone, keyboards and percussion.
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 Sephiroth of the Kabbalah , by Larry Sitsky. For SATB chorus and 3 percussionists.
1975 -	Cancion , by Graeme Koehne. For soprano, piano, harp, guitar, celeste and 4 percussionists..
1975 -	Folk Songs , by David Morgan. For 4 keyboard percussionists.
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.
1975 -	J & J , by Felix Werder. For clarinet and percussion.
1975 -	Kangaroo Hunt , by David Lumsdaine. For piano and percussion.
1977 -	As far as crawls the toad , for five young percussionists by Anne Boyd.
1977 -	Sums and Gongsong , by Robert Irving. For percussion sextet.
1977 -	Alanbiq , by Moya Henderson. For percussion sextet.

- 1978 - **Worldes Blis**, by Atis Danckops. For 5 percussionists and organ.
- 1979 - **Excerpts from Dante's Purgatorie**. by Gerard Brophy. For guitar and percussion.
- i) Il cammino de gl'innocenti (solo guitar)
 - ii) Danza del bambino candido
 - iii) Duro e disspasto a salire 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 Sarcich.
- 1979 - **Celebration**, by Peter Tahourdin. For flute, oboe, bassoon and percussion
- 1979 - **Concert pieces for timpani (with piano accompaniment)**, by Paul Sarcich
- 1979 - **Whirling Dance**, by Robert Lloyd. For percussion quartet.
- 1979 - **Etude on Kandian Drum Rhythms**, by Robert Lloyd. For solo percussionist.
- 1979 - **Bhakit No10 for percussion quartet (revised)**, by Robert Lloyd.
- 1980 - **Suite for Percussion Quintet**, by Eric Bryce.
- 1980 - **Hydra**, by Gerard Brophy. For percussion Trio.
- 1980 - **Concertino for xylophone and piano**, by Robert Lloyd.
- 1980 - **Four Drums - Music for Solo Drummer Playing Four Drums of Resonance**, by Robert Lloyd.
- 1980 - **Quartet**, by Bozidar Kos. For flute, viola, percussion and piano.
- 1980 - **Sonata for Solo Side Drum and Percussion Trio**, by Paul Sarcich
- 1980 - **Sticks**, by Robert Lloyd. For 4 drummers.
- 1981 - **Sonata for Trombone, Piano and Percussion**, by David Joseph
- 1981 - **Images**, by Carl Vine. For flute, cello, trombone, piano, harpsichord and percussion
- 1981 - **Undertones**, by Michael Smetanin. For bass clarinet and percussion
- 1981 - **For Marimba and Tape**, by Martin Wesley-Smith. Marimba with percussion and piano.
- 1981 - **Dialogue No. Four**, by Peter Tahourdin. For trombone and percussion.
- 1981 - **Nadja**, by Gerard Brophy. For percussion quartet and orchestra.
- 1981 - **Percussion Quartet**, by Colin Bright.
- 1982 - **Loss: for four percussionist**, by David Morgan.
- 1982 - **Shift: 3 drummers, 4 tuned drums each**, by Robert Lloyd.
- 1982 - **Stick Dance**, by Andrew Schultz. For clarinet, marimba and piano.
- 1982 - **Deserts 1**, by Trevor Pearce. For piano and percussion.
- 1982 - **Three Movements: flute, trombone, piano and percussion**, by Bozidar Kos
- 1982 - **A Running Game Song for Children**, by Larry Sitsky. For piano, pre-recorded tape and percussion..
- 1982 - **Marimba Dances**, by Ross Edwards. 3 movements for solo marimba.
- 1982 - **Axé**, by Gerard Brophy. For solo multi-percussion.
- 1982 - **Isoprisms**, by Robert Douglas. For flute, trombone, percussion and piano.
- 1982 - **Boat Song**, by Andrew Ford. For bass clarinet/alto sax. and marimba/perc.
- 1982 - **Tableaux**, by Riccardo Formosa. For piccolo, bass clarinet, percussion and harpsichord.
- 1982 - **Chamber Concerto**, by Gerald Glynn. For flute, clarinet, viola cello, drums, marimba and piano.
- 1982 - **Larrikin's lot**, by Moya Henderson. For flute, trombone, piano and percussion
- 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.
- 1982 - **Kundalini, the serpent fire**, by Larry Sitsky. For trombone, keyboards and percussion.
- 1983 - **Quidong**, by Michael Whittaker. For oboe, guitar and percussion.

- 1983 - **Soundscapes for Percussion and Orchestra**, by Richard Mills. For timp, 4 perc. harp, piano/celeste, strings.
- 1983 - **Echoes From An Antique Land**, by Jennifer Fowler. Forpercussion quintet.
- 1983 - **Ways - byways**, Keith Humble. For flute, cello, trombone, piano, celesta and percussion
- 1983 - **Ahotu (O matenga)**, by Gillian Whitehead. For flute/picc.,cello,trom., keyboards and percussion
- 1983 - **Voyage Into Solitude**, by David Morgan. Duo for multi-percussionist and 6 clarinets.
- 1983 - **Miniature III**, by Carl Vine. For flute, tuba, piano and percussion.
- 1983 - **Helices, from the Wakefield Chronicles**, by Vincent Plush. For percussion quartet.
- 1983 - **Fun and Games**, by David Morgan. 7 movements for percussion quartet.
- 1983 - **4 Studies for percussion quartet**, by Atis Danckops.
- 1983 - **The Speed of Sound**, by Michael Smetanin. For percussion quartet
- 1984 - **Tulpi-Stick Talk**, by Colin Bright. For percussion quartet (marimba, wood drums, tomtoms, temple bells)
- 1984 - **Secret Garden**, by Brian Howard. For flute, piano/celesta, cello and percussion
- 1984 - **Snark Hunting**, by Martin Wesley-Smith. For flute, keyboards, cello,perc. and tape
- 1984 - **Deserts II**, by Trevor Pearce. For flute, trombone, cello,piano and percussion
- 1984 - **Deep in my Hidden Country**, by Larry Sitsky. For soprano, flute, cello, piano and percussion
- 1984 - **Echoes/Fantasies**, by Ian Shanahan. For bass clarinet, vibraphoneand tubular bells.
- 1984 - **Concertino for three Soloists**, by Graham Hair. For cello, trombone and percussion.
- 1984 - **Down Under**, by David Morgan. For 7 percussionists.
- 1984 - **Spectra**, by James Penberthy. A percussion suite.
- 1984 - **Esparto Grass**, by Benjamin Thorne. For percussion quartet
- 1984 - **Kangaroo Hunt**, by David Lumsdaine. For piano and percussion.
- 1984 - **Karvai: for solo percussionist**, by Richard Davis Hames.
- 1984 - **A Different Kind of Jazz**, by Atis Danckops. For 4 percussionists.
- 1984 - **Stone River**, by Ralph Middenway. For bass and percussion quartet
- 1984 - **Quete: Ritual for Perambulatory Percussionist**, by Richard Davis Hames.
- 1984 - **KaKan**, by Anne Boyd. For alto flute, marimba and piano.
- 1984 - **Ladder of Escape**, by Michael Smetanin. For bass clarinet and percussion.
- 1984 - **Onomatopoeia**, by Nigel Westlake. For clarinet and percussion.
- 1984 - **Fanfare for 5 percussion**, by Paul Sarcich.
- 1985 - **Fanfare for 7 percussion**, by Paul Sarcich.
- 1985 - **Percussion Trio**, by David Morgan.
- 1985 - **For solo Percussion**, by Carl Vine.
- 1985 - **Alanbiq (revised)**, by Moya Henderson. For percussion quartet.
- 1985 - **Djurunga**, by Richard David Hames. For bass clarinet and marimba.
- 1985 - **Principles of simultaneous rhythms: for four drummers**, by Robert Lloyd.
- 1985 - **Scintillations II**, by Julian Yu
- 1985 - **Reflections**, by Ross Edwards. For piano and 3 percussion.
- 1985 - **Beast From Air**, by Brenton Broadstock. For trombone and percussion.
- 1985 - **Spherics**, by Andrew Schultz. For flute, cello, trombone, piano, organ and percussion.
- 1985 - **Windmill**, by Neil Currie. For clarinet. DX7. 2 percussion and piano.
- 1985 - **Trio No. 3**, by Keith Humble. For flute, percussion and piano.
- 1985 - **Windstream-percussion solo**, by Gillian Whitehead.

- 1985 - **Pace**, by Stephen Leek. For cello and percussion.
- 1985 - **Mosaics**, by Ralph Middenway. For reeds and percussion (duo).
- 1985 - **Elegy**, by Carl Vine. For flute, cello, trombone, 2 piano and percussion.
- 1985 - **Bellevue II**, by Michael Smetanin. For tenor sax, trombone and percussion.
- 1985 - **Maninya IV**, by Ross Edwards. For clarinet (or bass cl) trombone and marimba.
- 1986 - **Omphalo Centric Lecture**, by Nigel Westlake. For marimba quartet (playable on 2 marimbas).
- 1986 - **Circus Suite**, by Nigel Westlake. For percussion quartet.
- 1986 - **La crique du demain**, by Nigel Westlake. For percussion quartet.
- 1986 - **And Now for the News**, by Graeme Leak. For percussion and Midi.
- 1986 - **Antiphon for Two Drummers**, by Paul Sarcich.
- 1986 - **Plangge**, by Michael Whiticker. For percussion quartet.
- 1986 - **A se stesso**, by Robert Douglas. For vocal quartet, flute, trom., cello and percussion.
- 1986 - **Aubergine 7**, by Benjamin Thorne. For percussion trio.
- 1986 - **The Polymnia Triptych**, by Claudio Pompili. For soprano, flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, two pianoforte/synthesizer and two percussion.
- 1986 - **Four Duets for One Marimba**, by Paul Sarcich. For two players on one marimba.
- 1986 - **Ceremony I**, by Roger Smalley. For percussion quartet.
- 1986 - **Flower Songs**, by Ross Edwards. For 16 voices and 2 percussion.
- 1986 - **Diabolis in Musica**, by Larry Sitsky. For percussion quartet.
- 1986 - **Blues**, by Michael Barkl. For Eb contra-alto clarinet, marimba/vibraphone.
- 1986 - **Memoirs**, by Mark Isaacs. For vibraphone, marimba, percussionand piano.
- 1986 - **Impulses**, by Roger Smalley. For flute, cello, trombone,percussion, piano and DX7.
- 1986 - **Empty sky, Mootwingee**, by David Lumsdaine. For 2 pianos, flute, trom., cello and 2 percussion
- 1986 - **White Knight and Beaver**, by Martin Wesley-Smith. For trombone marimba and tape.
- 1986 - **Mosaics**, by Atis Danckops. For 3 percussion and 2 pianos.
- 1987 - **Mosaics for solo percussion**, by Ralph Middenway.
- 1987 - **Reminiscences**, by Robert Smallwood. For clarinet, percussion and piano.
- 1987 - **Webb Spinner**, by Daryl Pratt. For vibraphone.
- 1987 - **Frane**, by Daryl Pratt. For trombone and percussion.
- 1987 - **Sock Bop a Dop**, by Daryl Pratt. For two percussionists.
- 1987 - **Fabian Theory**, by Nigel Westlake. For sole percussion anddigital 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 quarter and two tapes.
- 1987 - **Sonata for percussionists**, by D. Knehans.
- 1987 - **Suite for Percussion Quintet**, by Eric Bryce.
- 1987 - **Module for One Percussion/Sonata for Percussion**, by Keith Humble. For solo percussion.
- 1987 - **Time Locked in His Tower**, by David Adams. For flute, guitar and percussion.
- 1987 - **Refractions 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 - **Black Snow**, by Michael Smetanin. For orchestra, 5 percussion, 2 harps
- 1987 - **Descent of the Avator**, by Jeff Pressing. For alto sax, trombone, percussion, keyboards.
- 1987 - **Percussion Music One**, by Phil Treloar. For solo multi-percussion.

- 1987 - **Aria**, by Carl Vine. For soprano, flute, cello, piano, celeste and percussion.
- 1987 - **Exiles**, by D. Knehans. For gtr., mandolin, clarinet, vln., vla., bass, perc. and tape.
- 1987 - **Florilegium II**, by Vincent Plush. Concertino for solo marimba and ensemble.
- 1987 - **Tongues, Swords and Keys**, by Gillian Whitehead. For percussion quartet.
- 1987 - **Percussion Concerto**, by Carl Vine. For soloist and orchestra.
- 1987 - **Soundscapes Too**, by Keith Humble. For wind ensemble, piano and percussion.
- 1987 - **Koan: alto saxophone, vibraphone, crotale and ceramic gongs** (revised), by Liza Lim. A duo for saxophone and percussion.
- 1987 - **In Time and Wind**, by Mark Cain. For Thongaphones and saxophones.
- 1987 - **Silencio**, by Martin Wesley-Smith. For Synergy.
- 1987 - **Defying Gravity**, by Carl Vine. For percussion quartet.
- 1988 - **Polyphonic Variations**, by Greg Shiemer. For solo percussion and electronics.
- 1988 - **Early Spring**, by Becky Llewellyn. For solo glockenspiel or vibraphone.
- 1988 - **Spirits' Spring**, by Phil Treloar. For clarinet, marimba and double bass.
- 1988 - **Booroora**, by Ross Edwards. For clarinet, percussion and double bass.
- 1988 - **Red Letter Dags**, by Lawrence Whiffin. For flute, oboe, trombone, baritone, percussion and piano.
- 1988 - **Pas de Deux**, by Allan Walter. For trombone, piano and percussion.
- 1988 - **From Your Lips to Gods Ear**, by Mark Pollard. For flute, piccolo, oboe and percussion.
- 1988 - **Windmill II**, by Niel Currie. For clarinet, cello, contrabass piano and percussion.
- 1988 - **Concerto for marimba/vibraphone and orchestra**, by Eric Bryce.
- 1988 - **Concerto for Marimba and Strings**, by Stephen Erskine. For marimba and string quintet.
- 1988 - **Concerto da Camera for Percussion and Strings**, by Paul Sarcich.
- 1988 - **Concerto for percussion and orchestra**, by David Morgan.
- 1988 - **Dawn Panels**, by Douglas Knehans. For percussion quartet.
- 1988 - **Percussion Quartet**, by Sharon Calcraft. For Synergy.
- 1988 - **Napiers Bones**, by Gillian Whitehead. For 24 percussion and improvising piano.
- 1988 - **Twins**, by Alan Lamb (M. Askill) For Synergy.
- 1988 - **Real Illusions**, by Roger Frampton. For trombone, keyboards and multi-percussion.
- 1988 - **Aghan and Aghan**, by Mark Cain. For Thongaphone and marimba.
- 1988 - **Battuosi**, by Stephen Cronin. For solo percussionist, 8 drums (2 bongos, snare drum, 4 Toms, pedal bass drum)
- 1988 - **Timetrek**, by Peter Tahourdin, For solo percussion.
- 1988 - **Quasar**, by Bozidar Kos. For percussion quartet.
- 1988 - **Strange Coin**, by Mark Finisterer. For bass clarinet and percussion.
- 1988 - **Song and Dance for Gabor**, by George Dreyfus. For clarinet, bass and taganing.
- 1988 - **Whispers of Fauvel**, by Raffaele Marcellino. For clarinet, and percussion.
- 1988 - **Fiddlers crus**, by Richard David Hames. For violin and percussion.
- 1988 - **Etchings for percussion quartet**, by Keith Humble.
- 1988 - **Dawn panels**, by Douglas Knehans. For percussion quartet.
- 1988 - **The Dream**, by Robert Lloyd. For percussion trio.
- 1988 - **Moth and Spider**, by Thomas Reiner. For alto saxophone and percussion.
- 1988 - **Garden of Earthly Desire**, by Lisa Lim. For flute, oboe, clarinet, electric guitar, harp, mandolin, violin, viola, cello, contrabass and percussion.
- 1989 - **Fantasia: the ancient battlefield for percussion solo**, by Wang-Hua Chu.
- 1989 - **Sun Song**, for percussion ensemble, by Peter Sculthorpe. For 4 players.
- 1989 - **Transformation: for 6 players with 6 handbells**, by Sarah Hopkins.

- 1989 - **Ball the Jack**, by Stephen Bull.
- 1989 - **Dialogue for Three**, by Peter Brideoake. For percussion, clarinet and viola.
- 1989 - **Redror**, by Michael Whiticker. For alto saxophone and percussion.
- 1989 - **Machine**, by Andrew Schultz. For percussion ensemble.
- 1989 - **Procession**, by Michael Askill. For Synergy.
- 1989 - **No trace**, by Michael Askill. For Synergy.
- 1989 - **The art of puffing: seventeen elegies for Thomas Chatterton**, by Andrew Ford. For bass clarinet/alto saxophone and percussion.
- 1989 - **Six Lyric Pieces**, by David Harris. For percussion and piano.
- 1989 - **Six pieces for marimba/vibraphone & piano**, by Eric Bryce.
- 1989 - **Chamber Concerto**, by David Harris. For marimba solo and 5 percussion.
- 1989 - **Cullenbenbong**, by Bruce Cale. For bass clarinet and temple bells.
- 1989 - **Gesta for xylophone and piano**, by Stephen Cronin.
- 1989 - **Pype and droom and....**, by Benjamin Thorn. For recorders and percussion.
- 1989 - **Moving Air**, by Nigel Westlake. For 4 percussionists and pre-recorded tape.
- 1989 - **Spectral Variations**, by Greg Shiemer. For trombone, percussion and computer.
- 1989 - **Funk**, by Chris Dench. For Eb contrabass clarinet and percussion.
- 1989 - **Yarrageh**, by Ross Edwards. For solo percussion and orchestra.
- 1990 - **Disco**, by Michael Barkl. For 4 percussionists and sequencer.
- 1990 - **The Phantom drummer of Tedworth**, by Larry Sitsky. For solo percussion.
- 1990 - **Djilile: arranged for percussion ensemble**, by Peter Sculthorpe.
- 1990 - **Sun Song II**, by Peter Sculthorpe. Includes Jabiru Dreaming revised. For percussion ensemble.
- 1990 - **Cold Air**, by Cathie Travers. For percussion, tarogato/Bb clarinet. Some parts (including the tarogato) may be played electronically.
- 1990 - **Napiers Bones**, by Gillian Whitehead. For Synergy.
- 1990 - **Quartet for Percussion**, by David Harris.
- 1990 - **Quinny on the Roof**, by Felix Werder. For percussion solo.
- 1990 - **Junkalan**, by Pye/Cain. For scrape industrial metal and plastics.
- 1990 - **Nederua**, by Michael Atherton. For 8 PVC stamping tubes.
- 1990 - **Implications No1**, by Phil Treloar. For percussion and tape.
- 1990 - **Tales of the Big Bang**, by Colin Bright. For percussion and ensemble.
- 1990 - **Thieves**, by Stephen Bull. For percussion quartet.
- 1990 - **Wood dance**, by Russell Gilmour. For solo marimba.
- 1990 - **Two pieces for marimba**, by Don Kay
- 1990 - **Cycles of vega**, by Ian Shanahan. For Eb clarinet and percussion.
- 1990 - **Lo spazio stellato si riflette in suoni...**, by Claudio Pompili. For Baroque flute and percussion or bass clarinet and percussion.
- 1990 - **Collide**, by Andrew Schultz. For bass clarinet and marimba.
- 1990 - **Lemurian dances**, by Michael Askill. For percussion quartet.
- 1990 - **Sine nomine**, by David Lumsdaine. For clarinet and percussion.
- 1990 - **Rubadub**, by Graeme Leak. For percussion quartet.
- 1990 - **New forms 3**, by Phil Treloar. For percussion quartet.
- 1990 - **Fantasy**, by Daryl Pratt. For percussion quartet.
- 1991 - **Driftglass**, by Chris Dench. For Solo percussion and five amplified instruments.
- 1991 - **Going on....**, by Michael Askill. For percussion and electronics.
- 1991 - **Black, white and rose**, by Tristram Cary. For marimba, gongs, woodblocks, and pre-recorded tape.
- 1991 - **Arcs and Heresies**, by Robert Douglas. For percussion quartet.
- 1991 - **Pefol for marimba solo**, by David Harris.
- 1991 - **Composition 9.5.91 for marimba solo**
- 1991 - **Composition 13.5.91 for marimba solo**, by David Harris.
- 1991 - **The Very Hidden Melody for marimba solo**
- 1991 - **The Very Hidden Melody for 3 tomtoms**, by David Harris.

- 1991 - **An Itsy-Bitsy Collection for marimba solo**, by David Morgan.
- 1991 - **Freefall**, by Becky Llewellyn. Percussion duet.
- 1991 - **Percussion mass**, by Paul Sarcich. For SATB choir and percussion quartet.
- 1991 - **Serious music**, by Gordon Kerry. For 3 percussionists.
- 1991 - **The Butcher's apron**, by Colin Bright. For percussion quartet.
- 1991 - **Thong and Dance**, by Mark Cain. For Thongaphone, percussion and winds.
- 1991 - **Prelude and dragonfly dance**, by Ross Edwards. For percussion quartet.
- 1991 - **Alchemy**, by Andrew Ford. For percussion quartet.
- 1991 - **Monolith**, by Cathie Travers. For piano and percussion.
- 1991 - **Minimalism isn't dead... it just smells funny**, by Michael Smetanin. For percussion quartet.
- 1991 - **Prelude and Brisked Fugue**, by Julian Yu. For percussion quartet.
- 1991 - **Malachite Glass** by Nigel Westlake. For clarinet and percussion.
- 1991 - (...and then) **Sunrise**, by Phil Treloar. For multiple percussion.
- 1992 - **Duck 5!** by Benjamin Thorn. For 3 percussionists.
- 1992 - **Glint**, by Gerard Brophy. For crotales, 2 glockenspiels, 2 vibraphones and gongs.
- 1992 - **Pluperfect square dance**, by Raffaele Marcellino. For slit drum, temple blocks, xylophone and marimba.
- 1992 - **Speed of Light**, by Michael Askill. For percussion quartet.
- 1992 - **Zed**, by Claire Jordan. For percussion quartet.
- 1993 - **Three camps thrice**, Arr. Ryszard Pusz. For snare drums, timpani, bass drum and cymbals.
- 1993 - **Beyond Categories**, by Roger Frampton. For percussion quartet.
- 1993 - **Gnome Anne's Land**, by Mark Cain. For marimba quartet.
- 1993 - **Split 5**, by Richard Lavenda. For marimba solo.
- 1993 - **Sonata for percussion Quintet**, by Neil Currie.
- 1993 - **Rough Cut**, by Stephen Benfall. For percussion quartet.
- 1993 - **El viento lucha a obscuras con tu sueño**, by Claudio Pompili. For bass clarinet and marimba.
- 1993 - **Il Chiosco del Limpido Autunno**, by Claudio Pompili. For baroque flute, marimba and two percussion.

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- 1 John Hopkins. *Australian Compositions in the Twentieth Century*. F. Callawaye and D. Tunley (eds), Oxford University Press, London, 1978, p.20.
 - 2 From the forward to *Jutish Melody Danish Suite*. Schott's, London, 1929.
 - 3 Patricia Brown. *Australian Compositions in the Twentieth Century*. F. Callawaye and D. Tunley (eds), Oxford University Press, London, 1978, p.47.
 - 4 James Murdoch. *Australia's Contemporary Composers*. Sun Books, Melbourne, 1975, p.9.
 - 5 *Ibid.*, p.104.
 - 6 *Ibid.*, p.66.
 - 7 Graham Hair. Interview, Melbourne, July 1992.
 - 8 James Murdoch. *op.cit.*, p.152.
 - 9 *Ibid.*, p.68.
 - 10 Synergy. Interview, Sydney, January 1993.
 - 11 Keith Humble. Letter to P. Martin, July 1992.
 - 12 Ryszard Pusz. Interview, Melbourne July 1992.
 - 13 Rebecca Lagos. Interview, Sydney, January 1993.
 - 14 Barry Quinn and Ian Cleworth. Interviews, Melbourne, January 1992 and Sydney, January 1993.
 - 15 Ryszard Pusz. *op. cit.*
 - 16 *Ibid.*
 - 17 *Ibid.*

Chapter 3

Synergy Percussion

Hypothesis 2 posits that the repertoire of Australian percussion music expanded considerably after the formation of the ensemble Synergy. This chapter looks at direct and indirect influences that Synergy may have had on the repertoire. In order to explain any influences by the ensemble there is a need to understand the background and experience of the individual members. In addition, this chapter will look at the ensemble's approach to business operation and the effects of funding on the repertoire, on performances and recording by Synergy and others. For its reference value, a log of all Synergy performances is presented at the end of this chapter.

Synergy Percussion, better known simply as Synergy, is a music ensemble of four percussionists. Resident in Sydney, the members of the ensemble (as at 1993) are founder members Michael Askill and Colin Piper, and Rebecca Lagos and Ian Cleworth who have been permanent members since 1987.

Synergy has the distinction of being Australia's longest established contemporary music group.¹

Formed in 1974 and briefly named the Sydney Percussion Ensemble, Synergy has performed contemporary chamber music for percussion instruments, or music in which percussion is used with other instruments on an equal level of importance.

Founder member and the ensemble's artistic director is Michael Askill. Askill's early percussion studies were in Adelaide with Richard Smith, in Strasbourg with Jean Batigne (1972) and in New York (1982) as a recipient of an International Fellowship from the Australia Council. He has held principal positions with the Melbourne (1973-74) and Sydney (1974-86) Symphony Orchestras, the Australian Chamber Orchestra (since 1985) and has performed with many ensembles devoted to the performance of contemporary music including Flederman, the Magic Puddin' Band, The Seymour Group, and the French ensembles Studio III and Les Percussions de Strasbourg. As soloist with the Sydney, Adelaide and Queensland Symphony Orchestras and the Australian Chamber Orchestra, he has worked closely with composers Richard Mills, HK Gruber, Peter Sculthorpe and Olivier Messaien. Askill left the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in 1986 to concentrate on his solo career, on composition and on his work with Synergy, but has concurrent interests in other ensembles and activities such as the ethno-classic group Southern Crossings and Attacca with John Williams.

Michael Askill has performed in Korea, Canada, Hong Kong, Indonesia, the Philippines, throughout the United States, France, England, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico and India mainly in association with Musica Viva and the Department of Foreign Affairs. He is currently Head of the Percussion Department at the Canberra School of Music, artistic director of Synergy and musical adviser to the Sydney Dance Company. Askill's many connections with people from areas such as dance, theatre and other music styles (eg. Jazz), and his long association with Australian composers such as Peter Sculthorpe, Ross Edwards, Martin Wesley-Smith and Nigel Westlake have exerted a strong influence on Synergy.²

Since 1970 Colin Piper has been percussionist with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. He also performed as soloist with Hans Werner Henze in

the internationally acclaimed performances of *El Cimarron* and with Luciano Berio at the 1976 Adelaide Festival. He has re-formed the Lane Cove Orchestra (now the Mosman Orchestra) for which he is conductor and musical director. Colin Piper's contribution to Synergy also includes his work as a pianist and conductor, indeed Cleworth has suggested that "if Colin wasn't in the group we wouldn't be playing *Scintillations II* (Yu) or *Reflections* (Edwards)".³

Rebecca Lagos gained her earliest experience as a percussionist at the age of 12 with the Canberra Opera Society and the Canberra Symphony Orchestra. She has held scholarships for the Piano as well as Percussion. Lagos studied with Richard Miller, a member of Synergy from 1976 through to 1987 (when Rebecca joined the group). Her studies were not, however, continuous with Miller. In 1980 (with the assistance of an International Fellowship from the Australia Council) she studied with George Gaber at University of Indiana-Bloomington, where she was a candidate for the Bachelor of Music degree. She has been a part-time lecturer at the Canberra School of Music and held the position of Principal Timpanist with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra (1984-1986) and acting Timpanist with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (occasionally during the same period). Lagos recalls her first awareness of Synergy as a concert performance group when asked to augment the group for a performance of *Ionisation* (Varèse) in 1984.

When Lagos joined Synergy in 1987 she moved to Sydney to take up her current position as percussionist with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. She has worked with the Australian Chamber Orchestra and The Seymour Group, and has taught at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. In 1990 Lagos received a Friends of the S.S.O. scholarship for the purpose of learning the Cimbalom with John Leach in London. The study of the Cimbalom by Lagos has facilitated the

performance of certain pieces in the Australian orchestral and chamber repertoire such as *Háry János* by Zoltán Kódaly.

Ian Cleworth studied with Richard Smith at the University of Adelaide and was appointed principal percussionist of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in 1986 following a three-year period with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. He has performed with the Australia Ensemble and The Seymour Group and has appeared as soloist for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra in a work written for him by composer Ross Edwards - *Yarrageh: Nocturne for Percussion and Orchestra* (1989). Cleworth also has an ongoing interest in the music of the traditional Japanese drum, the *taiko*, after beginning studies in Japan in 1981 with master drummer Sen Amano. Since then he has performed frequently with Amano and the *taiko* group, Arahan, as its only non-Japanese member, touring to Japan for performances in Tokyo, Hiroshima, Fujisawa and Kofu. The studies with Sen Amano and the ongoing interest in Japanese drumming have had a significant influence on the music of Synergy. This is discussed below under non-Western influences.

Earlier Members of Synergy

The original performance by Sydney Percussion Ensemble in 1974 of Maurice Ohana's *Choreographic Etudes* and Richard Meale's *Interiors Exteriors* was with Ian Bloxsom and Ron Reeves (as well as Askill and Piper). Reeves played in concerts through 1976-77 along with Bloxsom but by 1978 Richard Miller had replaced Reeves, although Ian Bloxsom remained a member until October 1980 when David Clarence took over. Clarence performed along with Miller, Askill and Piper until 1984. In 1984 Synergy performed a number of larger percussion works. In particular, *Ionisation* (1931) required the augmentation of the quartet and amongst others introduced Rebecca Lagos and Graeme Leak to the Synergy concert stage. A performance of *Toccata* (1942) by Carlos Chavez in

1985 involved a return of David Clarence (other players were Bruce Cotteral and Andrew Wilkie), but by July 7th 1985 at the Opera House Recording Hall, Graeme Leak took his place alongside Richard Miller, Colin Piper and Michael Askill to deliver the first concert presented by the group itself. That is, rather than the concert being presented by bodies such as the Conservatorium Composition School or the Canberra School of Music or the A.B.C. (etc.), this concert was presented by Synergy. 1985 was the first year that Synergy received funding as a performing ensemble.

Richard Miller, had been a percussionist with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra since 1968 and spent the early 1970s in Los Angeles, New York and London performing with Olivia Newton-John and The Shadows, while studying with leading US percussionists from the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Fred Hinger from the New York Metropolitan Opera.

Graeme Leak, taught at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music during 1981-1982 and at the Canberra School of Music 1984, and is currently lecturing at La Trobe University (Melbourne). As a performer his activities range from jazz-rock to classical orchestral and chamber work. Currently as a solo percussionist, he features instruments of his own design and construction, often with engaging humorous effect.

Graeme Leak and Richard Miller were to remain members during 1985 and 1986. These were important years for the ensemble because they marked the beginning of significant commissionings of Australian composers, and a heightened awareness of marketing, packaging and promotion through stylized programme notes and subscription promotion.

Since 1992 Synergy's funding application to the Australia Council has had apprentice training costed in. As percussion graduates, David Hewitt and Phillip South, have attended rehearsals for hands on training in the works of the repertoire. David Hewitt was apprentice during 1992 and Phillip South during 1993. Not only are these people trained to augment Synergy for large works (calling for more than a quartet), but should a Synergy member be unavailable for a particular concert then the concept of deputation by Hewitt or South (or others in the future) is not unrealistic. In this way, the concept of apprentices, further extends the establishment and potential longevity of the ensemble as an entity. However, scanning the Log of Synergy's Performances (see Appendix II), will show that the use of deputies is not a common practice.

The earliest members of Synergy began playing published scores from Europe and America but the desire to perform Australian works is evident from the first concert in 1974, with the inclusion of Richard Meale's *Interiors/Exteriors*. At that time the size of the international repertoire for percussion quartet was not large. Much of the repertoire was tailored to the forces of Les Percussions de Strasbourg, that is, for six players. The established works by Chavez or Varèse required even more players.

None of the Australian works was ideally suited for percussion quartet prior to Colin Bright's *Quartet* (1981), the first commission by Synergy (1980). The Glanville-Hicks *Sonata* is for 5 percussion (and piano); *Interiors/Exteriors*, for 2 pianos and 3 percussionists; and *Hydra* by Gerard Brophy (1980) is written for 3 percussionists. *How the Stars Were Made* (Sculthorpe, 1971) was reduced by Michael Askill from six players to four for the Synergy performance of 1979.

Given this lack of repertoire it may be said that Synergy came into existence not to play (an underplayed) repertoire, but to facilitate the creation of a new repertoire. This has come about through the commissioning of works or by the unsolicited desire of Australian composers to write for a quartet of master percussionists.

Les Percussions de Strasbourg had a considerable influence and impact on the formative years of Synergy as an entity and on the individuals. The Australian national tours by Les Percussions de Strasbourg in 1971 and 1978 had an impact on composers (particularly those commissioned by the ensemble - Sculthorpe and Henderson) and musicians alike. Michael Askill was particularly affected and in September of 1972 began studies in Strasbourg with group member Jean Batigne. The 1978 tour by Les Percussions de Strasbourg inspired Rebecca Lagos and Ian Cleworth to begin playing contemporary works for percussion. For Cleworth it was in particular the performance of Xenakis's *Persephassa*, for six percussionists scattered throughout the audience (1969).

It really was one of those experiences of like opening up.... I didn't know this was possible. I didn't know anything about the notation, all I knew was that they all had different tempi with a different metronome around their neck.⁴

One factor in the success of Synergy as a promoter of new works has been its efficient business organization and grant acquisition programme. With a business structure of a company limited by guarantee, Synergy presently receives annual funding from both the Australia Council and the NSW Ministry for the Arts. The majority of funding comes from the Australia Council where a projected amount to cover rehearsal/storage room rental, transport and other overheads for the concert season are applied for each year. Funding from the NSW Ministry for the Arts is on a project - by - project basis. An important role in the organization is that of administrator, a position held since 1980 by Jo Jacobs. She organizes a

variety of activities ranging from guest performers, contracts with bodies such as Musica Viva, ABC and various Festivals, to equipment transport and staging, tour details and structuring grant applications to government bodies. The administrator's duties relieve the members of the ensemble from the business and organizational aspects thus allowing them more time to concentrate on their artistic development. Grant applications are structured to encompass the costs of staging the coming year's concert series (including rehearsal space and storage etc.) and are offset against projected income from the sale of tickets.

When Jo Jacobs took on administration in 1980, a publicist, Allison Dunn, was contracted. Since 1993, however, this role has been taken over by Emma Collison. Importantly, the establishment of professional administration has allowed the ensemble to establish consistent marketing strategies.

The first year in which Synergy was funded was 1985. Colin Piper has affirmed that without funding the continued existence of Synergy would be tenuous at best. Most notable has been the need for a permanent rehearsal space, achieved in 1987. The bulk and array of instruments associated with a contemporary percussion repertoire highlights the need for rehearsal space, storage, transport and assistance with setting up and striking the stage. These overheads or needs are in contrast to those, for example, of a string or woodwind ensemble. It is true that Synergy managed to cope with the inconvenience of not having a regular rehearsal space the years before its current level of funding, but the members wonder if a return to the previous conditions might undermine the continued enthusiasm they have towards the ensemble, or certain pieces in the repertoire: that is, works with odd or bulky instruments or unwieldy and large set-ups. To this aspect Colin Piper has commented:

Having a rehearsal space and someone to shift the gear have made things so much easier for the development of the group.⁵

Another aspect to the importance of funding is the commissioning of works. Most of Synergy's repertoire has come from Australian composers funded through the Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council, but not all composers recommended for commissions by Synergy receive funding, so unless these composers proceed unpaid, funding affects the repertoire of the ensemble in so far as compositions desired by the ensemble may not be forthcoming. This is not to say that unsolicited works have not been included in the repertoire. A list of such works appears below.

Synergy commissions new works with the assistance of the Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council. Prior to 1978 grants to composers were special purpose grants and didn't necessarily specify the type of work(s) to be composed or who they were intended to be performed by. The first commission in conjunction with and specifically for Synergy was *Quartet* by Colin Bright (1979-1980 financial year). In 1982-83 Colin Bright was again commissioned, the result being *Tulpi Stick Talk*. In this same period Michael Smetanin was commissioned, and wrote *Speed of Sound*. In 1983-84 Ross Edwards received a commission (*Reflections*) and in 1985 Gillian Whitehead wrote a piece for solo percussion (*Windstream*) from a commission by Michael Askill. 1985-86 was the first of the prolific commissioning years. In this financial year composers commissioned were Moya Henderson (*Alanbiq*), Bozidar Kos (*Quasar*), Carl Vine (*Defying Gravity*), Martin Wesley-Smith (*Silencio*), Nigel Westlake (*Fabian Theory*), Mark Isaacs (*Memoirs*) and Michael Whiticker (*Plangge*). Two others, Elena Kats-Chernin and David Stanhope were commissioned, but the pieces did not eventuate. The only Synergy commission during 1987-88 was to Sharon Calcraft (*Percussion Quartet*).

Table 3 presents the names of composers commissioned by Synergy from 1988 to 1992 as well as the corresponding titles.

Table 3

Year	Composer	Title of Commissioned Work
1988–89	Michael Barkl Andrew Schultz Phil Treloar Peter Sculthorpe	<i>Disco</i> <i>Machine</i> <i>New Forms 3</i> <i>Djilile</i>
1989–90	Nigel Westlake Michael Askill Stephen Bull Daryl Pratt Graeme Leak	<i>Moving Air</i> <i>Lemurian Dancers</i> <i>Thieves</i> <i>Fantasy</i> <i>Rubadub</i>
1990–91	Andrew Ford Robert Douglas Colin Bright Michael Askill	<i>Alchemy</i> (untitled) <i>The Butchers Apron</i> <i>Going On</i>
	Carl Vine was jointly commissioned by Synergy and the ABC to write a concerto for percussion and orchestra. Nigel Westlake also received a commission from Michael Askill.	
1991–92	Julian Yu Cathy Travers Roger Frampton Stephen Cronin	<i>Prelude and Brisked Fugue</i> (untitled) <i>Beyond Categories</i> (untitled)

For 1992-93 Jeff Pressing was commissioned to write *Constructed Dreams*, and David Lumsdaine to write a 'new work for percussion quartet', Daryl Pratt: a new work for percussion sextet (Synergy and AtmaSphere), and Chris Dench: a new work for four solo percussionists.

To 1993, 38 compositions have been commissioned by Synergy (with the assistance of the Australia Council) from 31 different composers where funds total \$78,682.

In 1992 Gerard Brophy was commissioned by a European percussion ensemble to write *Glint*. It was presented (unsolicited) to Synergy as *Quartet* and was performed by Synergy in 1993.

In addition, there are works written especially for Synergy which are not funded through the Performing Arts Board, but simply result from a desire by composers to write for the ensemble.

Of these works, those performed subsequently by Synergy are:

Table 4

• <i>Hydra</i>	-	Gerard Brophy (1980)
• <i>Deserts I</i>	-	Trevor Pearce (1982)
• <i>Esparto Grass</i>	-	Benjamin Thorn (1984)
• <i>Onomatopoeia</i>	-	Nigel Westlake (1984)
• <i>Scintillation II</i>	-	Julian Yu (1985)
• <i>Omphalo Centric Lecture</i>	-	Nigel Westlake (1986)
• <i>Circus Suite</i>	-	Nigel Westlake (1986)
• <i>Tongues, Swords and Keys</i>	-	Gillian Whitehead (1987)
• <i>Twins</i>	-	Alan Lamb (1988)
• <i>Djilile</i>	-	Peter Sculthorpe (1990)
• <i>Jabiru Dreaming</i>	-	Peter Sculthorpe (1990)

Scintillations II (Julian Yu) came to Synergy in 1985 but: "we didn't get around to performing it until 1990".⁶

As the result of a good audience response to a number of performances of *Scintillation II*, Yu was commissioned in 1992 to compose *Prelude and Brisked Fugue*. Michael Askill has remarked that *Scintillation II* represented a variation of style for the repertoire, in that (like Edwards' *Reflections*)

it featured the piano skills of Colin Piper but approached a more ‘complexist’ style. Synergy’s quest to broaden the style base of their repertoire from 1990 onwards instigated applications for funding for commissions from Chris Dench and Ian Shanahan. Both are ‘complexist’⁷ composers and would have represented a contrast to pieces in the repertoire by say Vine or Westlake. These pieces did not receive funding in their particular round.

Synergy has also encouraged young composers to write for percussion. In 1992 2MBS (radio) sponsored a competition: *Write a Composition for Synergy*. There were twenty or so submissions as Michael Askill recalls, and of a high standard, making the winning choice difficult. The entrants were all young up-and-coming or recently-known composers. The winner was Claire Jordan with *Zed*.

Adelaide Percussions

Not only has Synergy commissioned more works from more composers than any other percussion ensemble, its existence prompted the formation of Adelaide Percussions, the second most prolific commissioning body for Australian percussion works. Ian Cleworth has commented:

I was in the first incarnation of the Adelaide Percussions with Ryszard (Pusz)....I remember that Ryszard started it very consciously as Adelaide's answer to Synergy.⁸

Pusz had an active involvement in the Australian percussion community prior to forming his group in 1978. He had instigated an informal Australian percussion society to disseminate information around the country some years earlier and coordinated activities with Barry Quinn in Melbourne in this regard.

An indirect form of funding or assistance is where ensembles are connected in some way to a university or other institution. Rehearsal and storage space may well be provided by an institution and ensembles may be indirectly supported in this manner by their key members being employed as institutional faculty members. For example Adelaide Percussions' key member Ryszard Pusz is head of percussion at Adelaide TAFE. Indirect assistance to Synergy is discussed below.

Commissions by ensembles other than Synergy

The most significant commissioning body for percussion works other than Synergy has been Adelaide Percussions. Under the direction and instigation of Ryszard Pusz, Adelaide Percussions (and Pusz as an individual) has commissioned twenty works from ten composers to a total funding of \$54,279 (to 1993). Fleiderman was also active in this area but were not specifically percussion-oriented.

Following is a table of commissions (through the Australia Council - Performing Arts Board) of works featuring percussion. The table is from 1979 to 1993 inclusive and represents various groups and individuals as commissioning bodies (excluding Synergy).

Few works have titles at the time of commissioning therefore documentation from the Australia Council gives little information in this regard. The following table reflects information from the Australia Council and a cross-referencing with the Register of Australian Percussion Music (Table 2), as well as further research through contact with the composers or commissioning body (where available) as to titles and changes to original details.

Table 5

Year (Financial)	Commissioning Body	Composer	Description
1979-80	R. Pusz	B. Kos	<i>Quartet for percussion viola flute and piano</i>
	Adelaide Percussions	E. Bryce	<i>Suite for percussion Quintet</i>
1980-81	Flederman	M. Wesley-Smith	<i>For Marimba and Tape</i>
	Flederman	R. Vella	For chamber ensemble
	Flederman	R. Edwards	For chamber ensemble
1981 - 82	Flederman	J. Pressing	For chamber ensemble
	Flederman	D. Joseph	<i>Sonata for trombone, percussion and keyboard</i>
	G. Leak	G. Brophy	<i>Axé</i> for solo percussion
1982-83	Adelaide Percussions	D. Morgan	<i>Loss</i> for percussion quartet
	Flederman	B. Kos	<i>Three Movements:</i> for flute, trombone, piano and percussion
	Flederman	L. Sitsky	<i>Kundalini, the serpent fire</i> Trombone, keyboards and percussion
1983-84	Flederman	V. Plush	<i>Facing the danger</i> any number of voices and instruments
	Flederman	M. Wesley-Smith	<i>Snark Hunting</i> Flute, cello, keyboard, percussion and tape
	Flederman	L. Whiffen	Flute, trombone and percussion
	Flederman	R. Vella	Flute, percussion and harpsichord
	P. Neville	R.D. Hames	<i>Quete</i> for preambulatory percussionist

	Adelaide Percussions	A. Danckops	<i>A Different Kind of Jazz</i> for percussion quartet
	Adelaide Percussions	R. Middenway	<i>Stone River</i> for bass and percussion quartet
	Adelaide Percussions	D. Morgan	<i>Voyage into Solitude</i> for clarinets and percussion
1984-85	Adelaide Percussions	L. Sitsky	<i>Diabolus in musica</i> for four percussionists
	Adelaide Percussions	D. Morgan	<i>Percussion Trio</i>
	Flederman	H. Beedere	Flute, keyboards and percussion
	G. Leak	K. Humble	<i>Module One</i> for solo percussion
	G. Leak	C. Vine	<i>For solo Percussion</i>
1985-86	Sydney Philharmonic	G. Whitehead	<i>Tongues, Swords & Keys</i> for 8 solo voices and 4 percussion
	Adelaide Percussions	T. Cary	<i>Rivers</i> for percussion quartet and electronics
	Adelaide Percussions	A. Danckops	<i>Mosaics</i> for percussion
1986-87	Adelaide Percussions	D. Knehans	<i>Sonata</i> for percussionists
	Adelaide Percussions	K. Humble	<i>Quartet</i> for percussion
	Adelaide Percussions	E. Bryce	<i>Jazz Suite</i> for percussion quartet
	D. Pye	R. Smalley	<i>Ceremony I</i> for percussion quartet
	P. Neville	M. Pollard	For two percussionists
	Pipeline	K. Humble	<i>Soundscapes Too</i> for wind ensemble, piano and percussion
	R. Pusz	R. Middenway	<i>Mosaics: for reeds and percussion duo</i>

	S. de Haan	P. Treloar	Wind band and percussion
	S. de Haan	R. Smalley	Trombone and percussion
	R. Dunlop	I. Shanahan	<i>Cycles of Vega</i> for clarinet and percussion
	Elision	D. Knehans	<i>Exiles</i> for guitar, mandolin, clarinet, vln., vla., bass, percussion and tapes
1987-88	J. Bailey	G. Whitehead	<i>Napier's Bones</i> for piano and 24 percussion
	R. Dunlop	M. Finsterer	<i>Strange Coin</i> for clarinet and percussion
	Elision Ensemble	M. Finsterer	Guitar and percussion
	G. Leak	G. Schiemer	<i>Polyphonic Variations</i> for solo percussion and electronics
	M. Nock	P. Treloar	Duet for percussion and keyboards
	D. Pereira	B. Cale	Strings, piano, harp and percussion
	Pipeline	P. Myers	Trombone, multi- percussion and tape delays
	Pipeline	R. Frampton	<i>Real Illusions</i> Trombone, keyboards and multi-percussion
	R. Pusz	D. Morgan	<i>Concerto</i> for percussion and orchestra
	R. Pusz	E. Bryce	<i>Concerto</i> for marimba/vibraphone and orchestra
	G. Reeves	P. Treloar	<i>Spirits' Spring</i> for clarinet, double bass and marimba
	G. Reeves	G. Dreyfus	<i>Song and Dance for Gabor</i> Clarinet, double bass and percussion
	G. Reeves	R. Edwards	<i>Booroora</i> for clarinet, double bass and percussion

1988-89	Australian Chamber Music Society	D. Pratt	Choir and percussion
	Duo Contemporain	M. Whiticker	<i>Redror</i> for bass, clarinet and percussion
	R. Pusz	D. Harris	<i>Chamber concerto</i> for percussion
	R. Pusz	L. Sitsky	<i>The Phantom Drummer</i> for solo percussion
	Pipeline	G. Schiemer	<i>Spectral Variations</i> for trombone, percussion and computer
	Pipeline	R. Vella	Flute, trombone, bass, piano and percussion
	Southern Crossings	M. Askill	Chamber ensemble with percussion
1989-90	Seymour Group	R. Marcellino	<i>Whispers of Fauvel</i> for clarinet and percussion
	Southern Crossings	C. Bright	<i>Tales of the Big Bang</i> for percussion and ensemble
	P. Treloar	D. Tolley	<i>Implications No. 1</i> for percussion and tape
	E. Poole	C. Pompili	<i>Lo spazio stellato si riflette in suoni</i> for Baroque flute and percussion
1990-91	Duo Contemporain	A. Schultz	<i>Collide</i> for bass clarinet and marimba
	Duo Contemporain	D. Lumsdaine	<i>Sine nomine</i> for clarinet and percussion
	Elision Ensemble	R. Hames	Double bass and percussion
1990-91	Elision Ensemble	H. Reeder	Solo percussion
	The Seymour Group	C. Travers	<i>Monolith</i> , Duo for percussion and piano
	R. Pusz	T. Cary	<i>Black White and Rose</i> for percussion and tape
	N. Westlake	M. Askill	Bass clarinet and percussion

	Duo Contemporain	C. Pompili	<i>El viento lucha a obscuras con tu sueños</i> for bass clarinet and marimba
	Duo Contemporain	M. Smetanin	Bass clarinet and percussion
	Nova	D. Pye	<i>Song of the Crane</i> for saxophones, keyboards and two percussion
1991-92	R. Pusz	N. Currie	<i>Sonata for percussion quintet</i>
	T. O'Kelly	P. Treloar	(..and then) <i>Sunrise</i> for multiple percussion
1992-93	Utungan Percussion	G. Sheehan	For percussion ensemble
	Duo Contemporain	S. Cronin	For bass clarinet and percussion
1993-94	2 Dance Plus	C. Travers	For percussion, sax and keyboards
	Astra Chamber Music Society	A.Byrne	Choir and percussion
	Duo Contemporain	S.Cronin	For bass clarinet and percussion
	The Seymour Group	E. Kats-Chernin	Solo percussion
	Satsuki Odamura	B. Conyngham	A new work for Odamura and Synergy
	Sydney Childrens Choir	M. Atherton	Choir, strings percussion
	Sydney Spring Festival of New Music	I. Shanahan	Piano and percussion
	Tall Poppies Foundation	M. Nock	For Synergy
	Tall Poppies Foundation	M. Askill	Solo percussion

More recently, as may be observed from the previous table, ensembles such as Elision and Pipeline are featuring percussion. Adelaide Percussions is no longer as active in commissioning as it was from 1983 to 1987 and other than for its founder and director, Ryszard Pusz, has not had the same constant membership in the way that Synergy has.

Also, in regard to the above table, information provided by the Australian Music Centre shows the Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council credited with "assistance in the commissioning of" various works performed by Flederman. However, these particular works: *Deserts II* (Pearce 1984), *Spherics* (Schultz 1985), *Ways-byways* (Humble 1983) and *Empty Sky, Mootwingee* (Lumsdaine 1986) are not listed as commissions with the Australia Council. They may represent the allocation of a portion of a general grant to Flederman, to the commissioning of certain composers.

Furthermore, it should be noted that two commissions originally intended to include percussion did not eventuate as such. These commissions were from Ros Dunlop to: Michael Whiticker (*On Slanting Ground* 1987) and Phil Treloar (*Womb of Parigum* 1988).

Nova Ensemble

What may seem odd in the previous table is the relative absence of commissionings by Western Australia groups - particularly from the Nova Ensemble whose director, David Pye is a composer and percussionist. In a telephone conversation with Mr. Pye the writer was advised that Nova has received the bulk of its funding from the West Australian department for the Arts. As noted under Scope and Limitations above, details regarding composers, titles and funding were not made available. However it should be noted that in 1991/92 Nova Ensemble Inc. applied to the Australia Council for a grant and received

\$4,199 for the “development of repertoire for non-mainsteam musicians leading to performance.”

The constitution of the Nova Ensemble, incorporated as an association in 1988, states its objectives as: encouraging compositions of high quality music and to provide performance opportunities for composers, particularly Australian composers, and more particularly West Australian composers.⁹

Formed in 1983 by David Pye, Nova was initially to perform the major chamber ensemble works of the twentieth century with a particular focus on the use of percussion, both separately and in mixed ensembles.¹⁰

Nova is not, however, one ensemble such as a ‘Percussion Quartet’. The original concept behind the establishment of Nova was a flexible group of musicians which would change according to the nature of the project being presented. Hence it would be seen as a percussion quartet for a particular programme of commissioned works, and the next concert may be presented by a line-up of flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano.

As it became obvious that certain combinations of people worked well together, the concept of core groups developed. These were particular line-ups that may present one or more projects each year, developing over a period of time. Amongst the players, each of those groups developed its own identity name for easy reference.¹¹

A ticketing system promoted by Nova displays a fresh and pragmatic approach to subscription marketing:

...we have developed a ticketing system designed to be as flexible as possible. A ticket will gain entry for one person to a number of events, or a number of people to a single event or a combination of the two. The ticket is transferable to another person and is valid for any Nova presented performance. Substantial savings on the door price are available by purchasing this ticket.

The Nova administration believes that this allows the audience the greatest possible incentive to buy a ticket, in so much as they know that they can choose which events they attend, can bring a friend, or miss a concert and make it up elsewhere. This flexibility allows the audience members to design their own subscription seasons from amongst the variety of concerts on offer.¹²

Recently, with the appointment of professional administration, production advisors: stage, technical, marketing, media, financial and legal, Nova is well positioned to rival Synergy in infrastructure.

A list of the Synergy repertoire (as at the time of writing) appears as Appendix I.

Theatrical Concepts and Collaborations

There is often more sense of theatre inherent in performances by percussion ensembles than many other ‘serious’ music ensembles by the fact that full-arm gestures are regularly involved in a percussionists’ technique, and the physical movement around the set-up of the various instruments is often visually exciting.

Synergy are very aware of the theatrical potential of their concerts and take great care with the lay-out of the instruments and the lighting:

The huge array of instruments from the Japanese *taiko* drums to the toy piano, are not only visually exciting, but the frenetic movement that accompanies their playing is an exhilarating foil to the dramatic form of the music.¹³

Synergy presented its first collaborative music-theatre piece *Matsuri*¹⁴ at Sydney’s Performance Space during 1991 and restaged it as part of their

subscription series for 1993. The music from *Matsuri* was recorded December 1993 on the Celestial Harmonies label and released in 1994.

Synergy with Synergy in 1992 represented the first collaboration between the Sydney Dance Company and Synergy. Michael Askill was the prime contact and collaborator for Synergy with choreographer Graeme Murphy for the Sydney Dance Company. This collaboration continued into 1993 with a performance at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre and in January 1994 at the National Theatre in Taipei. From Askill's perspective, *Synergy with Synergy* is a major step forward. Not only is it a development of elements already inherent in Synergy's work but the increased profile and exposure that will inevitably come from working with the Sydney Dance Company can only further build its already expanding audience base.¹⁵

Askill, considering the music for *Synergy with Synergy* and the fact that it wasn't an original score (specifically for the show) has reflected:

....comfort with the material was essential for the musicians not to be thrown by production pyrotechnics. The mere fact of working with dancers was a new challenge for them anyway, particularly in the accommodation of tempo fluctuations.

Askill cites Ross Edwards' work *Reflections* as an example of the different approach:

It is slow with a lot of space. In a concert we normally feel our way through it. We wait however long it takes for an instrument, like the gong, to sustain a note. We all take our cue from that and then we move on. Its a slightly different ballgame here as we have to take our cue from the dancers.¹⁶

Besides Edwards' *Reflections*, the musical programme for *Synergy with Synergy* features: Nigel Westlake's *Omphalo Centric Lecture*, Michael Askill's

Lemurian Dances, John Cage's *3rd Construction* and *Amores*, Istvan Marta's *Dolls House Story* and Elliott Carter's *Improvisation and Canaries*.

The programme, which mixes compositions from Australia and overseas, was chosen for its balance, its changes of mood and changes of tempo.¹⁷

Recordings

Synergy's first CD recording is part of *Anthology of Australian Music on Disk* (Canberra School of Music, Canberra Institute of the Arts, 1989). The works are:

<i>Reflections</i>	-	Ross Edwards
<i>Defying Gravity</i>	-	Carl Vine
<i>Deserts I</i>	-	Trevor Pearce
<i>Hydra</i>	-	Gerard Brophy

The second CD, released in 1991, was the only Australian recording to receive a certificate of Merit at the ABC/FM Stereo Record of the Year Awards. The works on this second CD are:

<i>Lemurian Dance</i>	-	Michael Askill
<i>Moving Air</i>	-	Nigel Westlake
<i>For Marimba and Tape</i>	-	Martin Wesley-Smith
<i>Third Construction</i>	-	John Cage
<i>Fabian Theory</i>	-	Nigel Westlake
<i>Green Piece</i>	-	Synergy improvisation
<i>Quasar</i>	-	Bozidar Kos

A third CD of the music from *Matsuri* was released in 1994. The music contains traditional and contemporary Japanese compositions as well as a piece by Michael Askill which combines Japanese and ‘Western’ percussion instruments. Another CD is currently in production. A list of works recorded so far are:

<i>A Dolls House Story</i>	-	Istvan Marta
<i>Amores</i>	-	John Cage
<i>Reflections</i>	-	Ross Edwards
<i>No 3</i>	-	Bill Ruyle
<i>Square Corners</i>	-	Dave Samuels
<i>Night Rain</i>	-	Dave Samuels
<i>Marimba Quartet</i>	-	Daniel Levitan

The ensemble considers that an earlier recording of *Reflections* does not do justice to the composition, particularly in light of the numerous rehearsals and performances of this piece since the original recording.

There exists one other CD with pieces from the Synergy repertoire. On this particular recording, called “Australian Percussion”, and recorded earlier than the Synergy CDs, all the percussion parts are played by Michael Askill (using multi-track over-dubbing techniques). The works are:

<i>Omphalo Centric Lecture</i>	-	Nigel Westlake
<i>How the Stars were Made</i>	-	Peter Sculthorpe
<i>Marimba Dances</i>	-	Ross Edwards
<i>White Knight and Beaver</i>	-	Martin Wesley-Smith

Synergy as an influence on compositional language

When asked whether there is a difference in emphasis of compositional language when writing for Synergy as compared to any other ensemble, composers Carl Vine and Bozidar Kos said, "No".¹⁸ However, Michael Askill in his role as a composer recognizes from experience that he may not be able to write extended/syncopated unison lines for other ensembles whereas the same lines would present little problem for Synergy members:

There were some things that I'd written for Synergy that I re-scored for "Attacka" that didn't present but a passing problem for Synergy but when presented to musicians of a different background the music wasn't comfortable.¹⁹

Also Ian Cleworth has observed from the percussion section of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra that since *Defying Gravity* (1987), symphonic works by Carl Vine have displayed more metric modulation in the scores and hemiola in the percussion parts:

There seems to be a logical progression as a composer, not a re-composing but a development of ideas and musical language.²⁰

When Vine was approached by Synergy in 1992 to write a new piece for the group he explained he was concentrating more on symphonic size works at the time. The end result of Synergy's request is that a new symphonic work featuring percussion quartet has been commissioned by the ABC. Clearly, this work would not have eventuated without Synergy's influence as a recognized musical entity and Vine's enthusiasm about writing for the ensemble.

Consolidation of Repertoire and Image and aspects assisting the continuance of Synergy

The ensemble recognizes:

....the huge assistance it gets from the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, which has willingly loaned instruments to Synergy's members, and arranged temporary rehearsal and performance space. Synergy and the SSO are part of a long tradition around the world of orchestra spawning chamber groups that work much of the year within their orchestral home, as well as pursuing their separate chamber ensemble careers. But, Colin Piper says, most such ensembles are made up of string players. You can remove four string players, and the orchestra can still function. But take out all the percussion members that's a different order! The SSO has been fantastic in its assistance. We've asked for long leave from the orchestra twice, once to perform in Paris, once in London; it was granted without question and with their total help and blessing.²¹

A consolidating factor which may have supported the longevity of the ensemble, was the decision (1990) to re-cycle certain pieces from past concert repertoire, thereby improving the standard of performance and developing a persona for the ensemble through the association of repertoire with the ensemble by audiences.

...up to that point each concert virtually consisted of new material. So it never really got out of the experimental stage.²²

According to Askill, Synergy now has a *foundation repertoire* and has established a style; a style base upon which to broaden, when desired. There has been a conscious decision not to be seen as an experimental group which existed for a small number of composers or for a small number of people with particular ideas as to what music should be. A decision that, notwithstanding a foundation repertoire, the group be seen as something growing, dynamically changing and not seen as being in "one spot" (Askill). To be seen as a group which could bring some complex and demanding music to an audience, as well as communicating through the enjoyment expressed in performance.

Synergy no longer use programme notes:

We do our best to get up and explain why we've chosen this piece, who the composer is, what the instruments are about etc.²³

There is an effort to "de-intellectualize" everything through verbal communication of the programme.²⁴ The performers don't consider this a lowest-common-denominator factor but rather an effort to reach the spirit of the audience. This type of communication has no effect, of course, on the artistic merit of the compositions or performance, but is a further display of the awareness of a need to develop relationships with an audience if the ensemble is to continue to flourish.

Performances

As well as recent performances in Paris (1989), the United Kingdom (1990), the Adelaide Festival (1990 and 1992), and the national tours for Musica Viva (Canberra and Newcastle in 1991; Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney in 1992; Hobart and Newcastle in 1993), Synergy regularly presents its own subscription series in the Eugene Goossens Hall. A log of Synergy performances to 1994 is found at Appendix II.

Synergy has been the recipient of numerous national awards for its performance of new Australian music and was awarded the 1991 Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award for its contribution to the performing arts in Australia.

Conclusion

Synergy is unique as a contemporary music ensemble in Australia. As Australia's longest established contemporary music group it has commissioned more composers to write for percussion than any other ensemble. Simply, the formation of Synergy, with highly-trained and capable percussionists, was an

open invitation to Australian composers to write for percussion ensemble. The high standard of musicianship of the ensemble and its acceptance by Australian composers and the music industry, elevated its status to that of Australia's premier contemporary music ensemble. The acceptance by Australian composers and the music community is evident in unsolicited works written for the ensemble by established composers and the number of composers and works commissioned by the ensemble through the Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council and further, by the sheer number and continuity of performances. The formation of Synergy influenced the formation of other percussion ensembles such as Adelaide Percussions and thereby indirectly influenced an even further expansion of the repertoire.

The active schedule of performances by Synergy over its many years (see Appendix II) featuring works by Australian composers has not only helped to establish a repertoire of Australian percussion music but also to disseminate it. This dissemination is furthered by a number of recordings available from Synergy and a number of collaborations with dance companies and theatrical groups has also broadened the awareness of Australian audiences to the concept of percussion music. International performances by the ensemble have helped to establish an international recognition of Australian percussion music.

1 The Seymour Group formed in 1976.

2 Synergy. Interview, Sydney, January 1993.

3 Ian Cleworth. Interview, Sydney, January 1993.

4 *Ibid.*

5 Colin Piper. Interview, Sydney, January 1993.

6 Michael Askill. Interview, Sydney, January 1993.

7 The term 'complexist' is accepted by the composers according to Askill.

8 Ian Cleworth. *op. cit.*

9 David Pye. Article in *Sounds Australian*. Australian Music Centre, Sydney, 1993.

10 *Ibid.*

11 *Ibid.*

12 *Ibid.*

13 Michael Askill. *op. cit.*

14 *Matsuri*. a theatre piece featuring a dancer trained in Japan where the music represents times of the day.

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- 15 Michael Askill. *op. cit.*
 - 16 Michael Askill. From programme notes to *Synergy with Synergy*, a collaboration between Synergy and Sydney Dance Company, 1992.
 - 17 Michael Askill. *op. cit.*
 - 18 Carl Vine and Bozidar Kos. Telephoned specifically on this question February 1 1993.
 - 19 Michael Askill. Interview, Sydney, January 1993.
 - 20 Ian Cleworth. *op. cit.*
 - 21 Colin Piper. *op. cit.*
 - 22 *Ibid.*
 - 23 Michael Askill. *op. cit.*
 - 24 *Ibid.*