

University of Adelaide
Elder Conservatorium of Music
Faculty of Arts

**Percussion performance :
challenges of the medium, technique and repertoire**

by
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Abstract

This dissertation for the degree of Master of Philosophy at the Elder Conservatorium of Music, University of Adelaide, examines the challenges to percussion performance presented by the medium, techniques and repertoire in a changing environment. The importation, development and adaptation of percussion instruments, the development of techniques in traditional and new contexts and composers' searches for new sounds to express a variety of musical and theatrical ideas coalesced over the course of the twentieth century to provide the basis for these changes and challenges. This study analyses the inter-relationships between each of these elements and consequent changes as they affect performance.

Percussion performance over the course of the twentieth century in the Art Music world was elevated from a subsidiary, back-of-stage provider of rhythm and volume to a centre-stage presentation of performances in its own right. This change was both quantitative and qualitative, which in the process, created a new genre. By examining the issues related to this change the study aims to provide an understanding of the elements of the instruments, the techniques and repertoire to be a resource for future analyses, compositions and performances.

The study, by investigating a selection of representative instruments and major techniques, examines significant developments in the medium and playing techniques and the relationships that exist between them and the repertoire and investigates the challenges these elements present for performance. The study draws mainly on four significant works, the Milhaud *Concerto pour batterie et petit orchestre*, Sculthorpe *Sonata for Viola and Percussion*, Bryce *Suite for Percussion Quintet* and Morgan *Loss for Percussion Quartet*, three of which I performed in close collaboration with the composers and analyses them in the context of musical intent and the challenges they present to performance. Furthermore the study draws conclusions on the challenges these elements present for a cohesive performance.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, or any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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