

SPEAK PERCUS SION

Australia Council Four Year Investment for Organisations EOI

WRITTEN SUPPORT MATERIAL

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COMPANY BIOGRAPHY

“virtuosic and adventurous” New York Times

Speak Percussion has shaped the sound of 21st century Australian percussion music through the creation and presentation of ambitious arts projects. Internationally recognised as a leader in the fields of experimental and contemporary classical music, Speak is constantly seeking to redefine the potential of percussion.

Speak Percussion engages in world-class, risk-taking and innovative projects with many of the world’s leading exponents of experimental and new music. It has commissioned and premiered over 220 works, and has contributed new 21st Century masterworks to the global percussion repertoire.

Speak Percussion's “breathtakingly impressive” (The West Australian) projects have toured to some of the world’s leading festivals and venues including Maerzmusik (Germany), SONICA (UK), The Barbican (UK), Darmstadt (Germany), Ruhrtriennale (Germany), Transart (Italy), Tage für Neue Musik, Zurich (Switzerland), TIPC (Taiwan), Salihara (Indonesia), CONNECT (Sweden), ARENA (Latvia), GAIDA (Lithuania) and Café OTO (UK).

Speak Percussion has five times been awarded an AMC/APRA Art Music Award, most recently being recognised as one of Australia’s foremost music companies, winning both the 2021 Art Music Awards Luminary Award for visionary leadership and sustained contributions to Australian art music and the prestigious Sidney Myer Award, for our past achievements and in consideration of our potential contribution to Australian society into the future.

Brief Organisational History

2000-2008 - Artist led unincorporated entity

2009 - Incorporated and appointed board

2010 – Appointed first Artistic Associate

2011 – Secured Annual funding: Arts Victoria

- Emerging Artists Program established

2014 – Secured Triennial funding: Arts Victoria and Australia Council for the Arts

2015 - Since 2010 annual turnover increased by 554%

- Appointed first Executive Producer

- Launched Sounds Unheard education program

- Secured Triennial funding: Victorian Department of Education & Training and City of Melbourne for schools programs focused on underserved groups

2017 – Secured Four-year funding: Australia Council for the Arts and Creative Victoria

2018 – Secured Triennial funding: City of Melbourne and Vic Department of Education & Training

- Annual turnover increased by 62% from 2016

2019 – Secured Multi-year funding: Darebin City Council and Helen Macpherson Smith Trust for emerging artist programs

2020 – Became Darebin Arts Centre Anchor Tenant 2021

– Renewed Four-year funding: Australia Council for the Arts and Creative Victoria

2021 – Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award Winners

2022 – Renewed Multi-year funding: City of Melbourne and Darebin City Council

STAFF BIOGRAPHIES

CEO/ Artistic Director: Eugene Ughetti

Eugene Ughetti is the founding artistic director of Speak Percussion. His artistic output is primarily an exploration of the materiality of percussion, but his work could also engage with ideas like drum aged rum, supersonic performance or the percussive military. Eugene is known for tackling complex and ambitious art music projects whether as director, composer, performer or conductor.

He has worked with some of the world's guiding lights in new music including Pierre Boulez, Liza Lim, Steve Reich and John Zorn.

Eugene's works have been presented at Darmstadt (Germany), Roulette (New York), SONICA (UK), Ruhrtriennale (Germany), Mona Foma (Hobart), Arts Centre Melbourne, Transart (Italy), Lucerne Festival (Switzerland), Noordezon Festival (The Netherlands), PICA (Perth), SIPFest (Jakarta), National Museum (Singapore), George Town Festival (Malaysia) among others.

Eugene has worked with most of Australia's leading new music ensembles including conducting ELISION in the world premiere of Richard Barrett's CONSTRUCTION in the 2011 Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival. He has worked with some of the world's finest conductors including Valery Gergiev, James Levine, Pierre Boulez and Charles Dutoit. He has composed works for The Australian Ballet, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, ABC and Bionics Institute.

Eugene won the inaugural Sidney Myer Creative Fellowship (2012), MCA/Freedman Fellowship for Classical Music (2011), Australia Council for the Arts Creative Australia Music Fellowship and various national Art Music Awards for his work with Speak Percussion.

Executive Producer: Ashley Dyer

Ashley Dyer is a producer, performance maker and workshop facilitator based in Melbourne, Australia. Most recently, 2017-2022, he worked as the Program Manager at Dancehouse – Australia's leading presenter of independent contemporary dance - overseeing the delivery of all their artistic activities. These included keynote projects Dance Massive and the Keir Choreographic Award, and artistic and community development initiatives like their Emerging Choreographers Program and Dancehousing.

Ashley was employed by Next Wave Festival 2012 as an Associate Producer, and between 2007 and 2011 as part of the artist run initiative Quarterbred, where he curated and managed a diverse range of programs and works including Erskineville's Live Art festival Tiny Stadiums. In May 2013, the same year as Eugene, he was awarded a Creative Australia, Experimental Arts Fellowship by the Australia Council for the Arts.

Assistant Artistic Director: Kaylie Melville

Melbourne-based percussionist Kaylie Melville is a soloist and chamber musician dedicated to new music performance. Noted for her "extraordinary ability to impart a sense of musicality to even the smallest gestures" (Partial Durations), Kaylie's practice incorporates playing, improvising, directing, curating and teaching.

With Speak Percussion, Kaylie is involved in all the company's projects, either performing-in, co-devising, and/or leading new and existing projects. In addition, she coordinates their Sounds Unheard education program for underserved, gifted and talented secondary music students supported by the Department of Education and Training, and their Bespoke Artists program for Emerging Artists. Alongside her work with Speak, Kaylie leads contemporary ensemble Rubiks Collective as co-Artistic Director and frequently works with leading Australian ensembles and orchestras.

Resident Creative Director: Duré Dara OAM

Duré Dara OAM is Indian by race, Malaysian by birth and Australian by choice. Since the 60s, she has frequently performed on ABC radio, recordings and at festivals and concerts around Australia as an improvising musician and contemporary jazz player, most notably in a duet with David Tolley. She is widely celebrated as a trailblazing restaurateur, business woman, women's equity activist and percussionist.

She has received the Medal of Order of Australia for services to the community and women's groups. She was selected on the Inaugural Women's Honour Roll by the Victorian government; was named a Legend of the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival; has received the Vida Goldstein Award for excellence in trade; and was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award at Parliament House in Canberra from the National Restaurant and Catering Association.

Administration and Marketing Coordinator: Jasmin Wing-Yin Leung

Jasmin Wing-Yin Leung is a composer, musician and arts event organiser who works within composition, improvisation and installation settings. As an arts worker she has coordinated music masterclasses in rural Queensland and recently she produced the AAO's First Nations Artist Residency.

As an artist, she is interested in the sonic possibilities of resonance, intonation, hauntings and the environment. She plays the Erhu and has developed an extended practice for this instrument. Since 2014 she has regularly visited Hong Kong to further her study this instrument.

In 2021/2022 she was made Associate Artist of the Australian Art Orchestra through their 'Pathfinder' Music Leadership program. She has performed or presented work across Australia and in China, Europe and North America.

Special Projects Producer: Bidy Connor

Bidy Connor has over 25 years of experience producing and creating work. She has composed, arranged and performed for film, television, theatre, large-scale community events and games. In 2016 she was a finalist in The Melbourne Music Prize Outstanding Musicians Award. Bidy is the Artistic Director, violist and vocalist for The Letter String Quartet (TLSQ), an innovative and captivating ensemble who push the sonic possibilities of the string quartet into new realms. TLSQ have been nominated for a Green Room Award (Contemporary Sound Performance).

Bidy has worked with Spiritualized (Supersense Festival 2017), Mick Harvey, Winged Victory for The Sullen (USA), Jherik Bischoff (USA), Jen Cloher, Thelma Plum, Holy Holy, John Cale (Supersense Festival 2016) and Richard Frankland.

Artist In Residence: Aaron Wyatt

Aaron is an accomplished violist who, before moving to Melbourne to take up an assistant lectureship at Monash, was a regular casual with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra and is also recognised as the first Australian First Nations person to conduct one of the major Symphony Orchestras in Australia. He has played in a wide variety of ensembles across many genres, and has toured internationally, including with the award-winning Decibel New Music ensemble. Aaron is also the developer behind the Decibel ScorePlayer app, the group's cutting edge, animated graphic notation software for the iPad.

Aaron was nominated for a Helpmann Award for his role as musical director of the premiere season of Cat Hope's new opera, *Speechless*, at the 2019 Perth International Arts Festival. Aaron has also recently taken on the role of director of Ensemble Dutala. The brainchild of Yorta Yorta soprano and composer Deborah Cheetham AO, the group aims to bring together Indigenous classical musicians from around the country. Most recently, he premiered Cheetham's new work, *Nanyubak*, for viola and orchestra as a soloist with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

15 December 2022

To Whom It May Concern,

I am thrilled to accept the position of Artist in Residence at Speak Percussion and to continue our dialogue and collaboration in a more formal capacity. This open-ended opportunity is rare and gives me incredible time, space, resources and ongoing support to not only imagine and develop new projects, but also to develop artistic and business skills whilst following my musical and compositional interests to their logical ends.

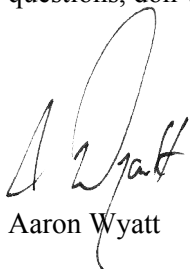
Their confidence in my developing artistry is quite humbling. Speak Percussion are a nation leading music company with an international reputation, and their work extends well beyond percussion. Their core staff have experience working across the full spectrum of music and arts practice. Both Ashley Dyer and Eugene Ughetti have created many complicated, large scale, lauded experimental works. Both Kaylie Melville and Biddy Connor have led their own successful ensembles and companies. As I further discover and develop my interests, I look forward to sharing with them and learning from their successes.

This opportunity comes at a perfect time. As an established musician, conductor, software developer and composer, with Speak I hope to develop my skills as an artist maker and curator by learning how to realise and lead my own projects. Additionally, I have relatively recently relocated from Perth to Melbourne and am looking to establish new connections and networks on Australia's East Coast and abroad.

Initially and more specifically, with this opportunity I will focus on creating and curating two new works: 1) Digital Echoes: a new music performance/installation that explores the virtual topology of the online world by sending and returning live played, experienced in-person, music to unimaginably distant concert halls and back; and 2) Decolonising the Bells: a new curatorial project where I/we commission new post-instrumental pieces for the Federation Handbells by First Nations artists including one by me.

Finally, as a Noongar, Yamatji and Wongi man I'm delighted to work with such a caring and socially engaged organisation to enable their broader goals around supporting First Nations arts and culture by empowering Indigenous artists. Their nuanced, long term, meaningful approach – one that publicly foregrounds artistry before identity – ensures that artists like me are free to be artists. Their unwavering whole organisation (financial, artistic, production and administrative) support gives me confidence to take risks and work on my own and at my own pace.

I hope I can support their activity as much as I already feel supported. If you have any further questions, don't hesitate to contact me.



Aaron Wyatt

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SOME WORKS IN REPERTOIRE

Polar Force

“thoughtful and refined, strong enough to carry its audience from the middle of Redfern into the middle of Antarctica in the most raw, novel way.” Limelight

Antarctica’s beauty and infinite complexity are explored in Speak Percussion’s Polar Force: an immersive and multi-sensorial live music performance that combines custom-built instruments with pristine field recordings all played within a white inflatable structure. The high-fidelity recordings of katabatic winds and extreme weather events are enhanced by industrial instruments made to acoustically manipulate the natural elements of Antarctica: air, water and ice.

Atlas of The Sky

Winner of APRA AMCOS Art Music Award for Performance of the year in 2019

Atlas of the Sky is a work of dramatic and ritualistic power by award-winning and internationally acclaimed Australian composer Liza Lim. It combines driving rhythms with swarming percussion and vocal sounds from a ‘crowd’ of twenty trained and untrained performers. Using purpose-built instruments, the work demonstrates the expressive elemental power of string drums, stones, wood blocks.

Scream Star

“Scream Star is many things: absurd and funny, moving and creative, precise and demanding. It is, in short, seriously good music-making. It is performance art and theatre, and new music-making at its finest.” – Limelight

Scream Star is a live music performance collision of sound and screen with mashed-up projection and percussion. It features a triptych of new compositions by three world renowned compositional voices in the experimental and conceptual music, each responding to all-too-familiar tropes of the live music and visuals format.

March Static

Coordinated using FM radio transmission, professional and amateur wind players, drummers and percussionists perform with rhythmic precision whilst navigating choreographic sequences through the external and internal spaces and sites of each presenter. This is mobile, anti-military art music designed to engage fluidly with audiences, sites and acoustic spaces.

Bell Curve

In this spatial performance work featuring community members and music students, twelve independent bell ringers dissect the finest details in rhythm, pitch and resonance to unlock the beauty of Victoria’s Federation Hand Bells. Using wireless networked click tracks and a quadraphonic sound system, the performers surround the audience playing perfectly synchronised attacks and stunningly complex rhythms.

Before Nightfall Series

Before Nightfall is a series of new artistic encounters between Speak Percussion and invited guest artists. Each guest artist works with Speak core artists intensively across one day, experimenting with a range of musical concepts. In the evening, these investigations culminate in a live performance and recorded release.

SOME WORK IN DEVELOPMENT

Pigeons

In Pigeons a modified clay pigeon (traps machine) shooter takes centre stage. Clay targets hurtle through the air, whistling and leaving debris in their wake. Rows of tuned and amplified bird spikes line the stage floor like a bristling musical instrument and animal trap. Cap guns, feather dusters, bird calls and UV lights combine in a raw and visceral experimental percussion work. Through this theatricalised music performance work, two performers interrogate the practices, peril and psychology of using birds in sporting events, as messengers and as live targets.

LARPING (working title)

LARPING delivers a medieval military spectacular. Massed percussion battery of the Middle Ages Combines with the worldwide phenomenon of Larping in a spectacular theatrical-music event. Imagine 60 adults dressed in costume, pouring their emotional selves into recreating the adrenaline of survival in the Middle Ages through a massed percussive-Live-Action-Role-Play happening. The intensity of this theatrical experience is underpinned by an immaculately presented percussion work that both underpins the musical score, the foley of battle and expertly recreates medieval sound world.

Pride March

Celebrates the LGBTQIA+ community through a participatory collaboration of queerness on the move. Working with All The Queens Men, Slipstream Circus and the Queer community in regional northern Tasmania this work investigates the sonic colours of Carnival's samba music. It brings together theatre, music and pride in an inclusive performance event.

Decolonising the Bells

Decolonising the Bells is ritualised concert that renames the iconic Federation Handbells. Lead by Noongar man Aaron Wyatt and presented at the La Trobe Reading Room (Dome) State Library of Victoria, it will feature a curated series of between 5 and 7 new experimental compositions by nationally based First Nations artists, each radically reimagining the bells conventional uses; the sounds they conventionally make; and critiquing their history. The work aims to spark conversation about reconciliation and the limits of symbolic action.

Dark Numbers

Dark Numbers will be a new collaboration with University of Melbourne's mathematics department, Arts at CERN and the ARC Centre of Excellence for Dark Matter Particle Physics. Emphasising hyper-rhythmical patterns and precision playing at a distance, the work will conceptually explore modelling data, creative technologies and scientific tools that help us make sense of the great mysteries of our universe.

Hidden Sonics

Hidden Sonics is a process driven project that reveals the hidden sounds and stories of location or group of people. First taking place with farmers in regional NSW, this series of site and community responsive music recordings/compositions will next highlight the secret sounds of restaurateurs from some of Melbourne's most loved food establishments: Trader House. Created in partnership with Andrew McConnell, the founder, owner, and executive chef of Trader House, a collective of award-winning hospitality ventures, from restaurants and butcheries to wine bars and a tailored events company.

SECTOR INITIATIVES

Overview

We believe that active inclusion of all peoples and their diverse approaches and traditions creates better and more just music, art, culture and society. We contribute to the transformation of Australian music and the broader performing arts sector through initiatives that together provide whole career pathways for artists from underrepresented backgrounds. As a small company, we prioritize substantial ongoing relationship building when supporting individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Artist in Residence

Speak Percussion's Artist in Residence has been established to support a First Nations Australian artist to self-determine their own career path. It provides a long term ongoing, financial, organisational and artistic commitment to an artist. It supports an artist on their terms and may involve helping them to realise their own projects, build stronger networks, secure funding and presenters or develop new artistic and business skills. As our inaugural recipient, we hope Aaron Wyatt will work with the company for many years. Longer term, the initiative may increase to support more artists.

Resident Creative Director

Speak's Resident Creative Director role was established as a way to pay tribute to a senior artist and percussion elder from a culturally diverse background who we felt was under profiled and under acknowledged. Dure's legacy as a women's equality advocate and food entrepreneur is established and has been formally highlighted and awarded. Her trailblazing work as an artistic collaborator and improvising percussionist is less well known. In 2023 Dure will curate a series of improvised performances that embody her legacy by combining much needed conversation about social inclusion, with innovative food and improvised music. She will also support our Bespoke Artists through mentorship and will offer the company guidance on its approaches to inclusion and philanthropy.

Australian performing arts communities don't do enough to honour the successes of our senior artists and we do even less for senior women, from non-anglo cultural backgrounds. We hope that by platforming her practice and celebrating her legacy, her example will inspire and give confidence to future generations. Longer term, we hope to continue similar initiatives to this one with other music community elders.

Artistic Associates

Speak's Artistic Associates are core artists on all Speak projects. They contribute towards the creative developments, presentations, recordings and tours within the company's annual program as either lead artists, collaborating artists or project managers. Historically the position was first held by Matthias Schack-Arnott, who since leaving the company has established a national reputation as an outstanding maker. Most recently this position was held by current staff member Kaylie Melville and sound artist/composer Tilman Robinson.

Successive Living Music Reports and the recent Raising Their Voices report, together demonstrate that the Australian music sector needs to do more about gender equity. Speak takes this seriously and as a commitment to workplace gender equality, over the course of the next funding cycle, we intend on upskilling and promoting Kaylie Melville into the role of Co-Artistic Director of the company. This new position will be jointly held with current Artistic Director Eugene Ughetti.

Bespoke Artists

Now in its second iteration, the Bespoke Artists Program is an 18 month long professional development initiative that supports independent, early and mid-career artists working in contemporary music, sound and performance. The program is a direct response to industry need for a program that provides useful skills, practical tools and valuable industry insights to the next generation of artistic leaders.

Bespoke provides development opportunities in three key areas - business, career and artistic leadership - with a focus on creating sustainable career pathways for artists from diverse musical and cultural backgrounds. Participants develop skills in ongoing self-sustaining artistic enquiry through a long-term engagement with Speak Percussion and a hand-picked team of industry mentors. Through the Bespoke program, this diverse cohort of artists work individually and collaboratively to define their creative goals, develop new skills and secure development and/or presentation opportunities for their work.

Sounds Unheard

Sounds Unheard is a free music education program for Victorian secondary music students, offering unique opportunities for young musicians and composers from all areas of music making to expand their knowledge and creativity. Since launching in 2015, Sounds Unheard has offered an annual program of music education activities that develop students' talents and inspire through innovative approaches to music making. The program connects students with role models from diverse backgrounds and musical practices, and real-world opportunities to participate in making and presenting new work.

Genuinely tackling diversity and inclusion in new music practice requires long term ongoing initiatives. Now in its 7th year, Sounds Unheard receives ongoing funding from the Department of Education to specifically offer underserved talented secondary students from often marginalised groups access to, experience with and exposure to professional/experimental practice free of charge.

Moving forward, Speak Percussion will also use this program, and its associated activities and YouTube Channel, to platform established and/or senior artists from diverse cultural and/or niche music backgrounds. We hope to inspire younger artists to follow in the footsteps of successful people like them and through this raise the status of many sounds that till now have been unheard.

Sounds Unheard - Specialist Schools Incursions

After completing several small-scale percussion workshops for young people with a disability in 2022, Speak received multi-year funding (2023-25) from Darebin City Council to consolidate its approaches into an ongoing program for targeted Specialist Schools and their students. This program will be developed with disability experts/advocates to ensure competency and best practice are followed, and also with three percussionists, who have each independently developed their own projects and methods for working with people with a disability: Alon Ilsar, Dale Gorefinkel and Robbie Avenaim.

In parallel students from these schools, with the assistance of Darebin Arts Centre and their community bus, will be given free tickets and transportation to special accessible, and/or relaxed performances of our shows. This will assist our strategic vision to create more accessible opportunities to experience our work.

INDICATIVE LIST OF COLLABORATORS

The following includes collaborators that Speak Percussion is currently working with, has historically worked with, or will continue to work with in the future. It is indicative of the types of people and organisations Speak will continue to collaborate with over the next six years

Musicians and Composers

Steve Reich (USA), Ilan Volkov (ISRAEL), The Necks (AUS), Liza Lim (AUS), Genevieve Lacey (AUS), Oren Ambarchi (AUS), Chris Corsano (USA), Ingar Zach (NOR), Jessie Marino (USA/DE), Mark Applebaum (USA), Cathy Milliken (AUS/DE), Johannes Kreidler (DE), Damien Ricketson (AUS), Erkki Veltheim (AUS), Cathy Van Eck (BEL), Josephine Macken (AUS), Marianthi Papalexandri-Alexandri (GRE), Andreas Eduardo Frank (CH) Steven Kazuo Takasugi (USA), Richard Barrett (UK), Jon Rose (AUS), Thomas Meadowcroft (AUS), Eyvind Kang (USA), Bent Sørensen (DK), Matthew Shlomowitz (UK/AUS), Steven Schick (USA), Fritz Hauser (CH), Michael Pisaro (USA), Claire Chase (USA), Robbie Avenaim (AUS), Robin Fox (AUS), Lamine Sonko (SN/AUS) and Phil Samartzis (AUS). Musicians of the Australian National Academy of Music.

Key collaborators

First Nations musician/composer Artist In Residence Aaron Wyatt;
Malaysian/Australian percussion elder and women's rights activist, Resident Creative Director Duré Dara.

Cross Disciplinary Artists & Companies

Dance company Chunky Move; Back to Back's Bruce Gladwin; All The Queens Men; designer, Nick Roux; The Rabble's Kate Davis; La Mama Theatre; Slipstream Circus; Gertrude Contemporary; dramaturg and designer Clare Britton; lighting designer Bosco Shaw; Megafun's director Keith Tucker; Choreographer Jo Lloyd; Visual artist Cyrus Tang; Installation artist James Nguyen; Ceramicist Jia Jia Chen and Video artist Laura Spark (UK).

Transdisciplinary (Working Beyond the Arts)

Youtuber and social entrepreneur Julian O'Shea.
Executive chef of award-winning hospitality venture Trader House -Andrew McConnell.
Industrial designer Malte Wagenfeld, RMIT Industrial Design School
Farmers from Juigong in regional NSW
University of Melbourne's mathematics department
Arts at CERN and the ARC Centre of Excellence for Dark Matter Particle Physics