LARRY Polansky was in Perth for three days in September. We had hoped for Jody Diamond too, but she had visa problems and couldn’t get out of Indonesia (where she is working on a Fulbright scholarship until mid-89). We hope she will be able to visit in July next year.

During his time here Larry gave a lecture/performance at PICA and conducted a workshop with the EYU (Evos Youth Ensemble). He did a lot of talking and we went after him with a tape recorder. The Open Ear will present a Larry Polansky show on Tuesday, November 8 (GUYS-FM at 11pm).

Larry has been heavily involved in the running of the Centre for Contemporary Music at Mills College, Oakland, since 1981. He is the founder of Frog Peak Music, a highly successful composers’ collective devoted to the distribution and availability of experimental work. We were interested to hear his thoughts on the philosophy and practicalities of experimental new music organisations:

“In the States to get money you have to have a very long track record — you can’t go to the N.E.A. (National Endowment for the Arts) unless you’ve been doing what you’re doing for 5 years at least. You couldn’t start an organisation and then go to the N.E.A. and tell them about your good intentions — they won’t even look at you. Jody had A.G.I. (American Gamelan Institute) running for 8 years before she got just a few thousand dollars from the N.E.A. You have to do it all out of your own pocket, which is hard. It weeds out a lot of small organisations.

“When I started Frog Peak years ago I was so sick of hustling money from governments I said Frog Peak is never going to ask anyone for money. It’ll either die or live purely by the fact of whether it’s useful or not. And it’s alive... it’s made me very poor! But I was writing 7 or 8 grant applications a year for the Centre Centre (Centre for Contemporary Music, Mills College) and all for $5,000. We’d do the seminar series and we were paying people $100 a seminar — world-class people. Xenakis spoke at Mills for $100. It’s just a lot easier to ask if they’ll do it for free. So Frog Peak is run just like any other business. I don’t have to answer to anybody. If I want to put money into a certain project I can do it — I don’t have to justify it to anyone. And it’s worked. We’ve managed to publish three or four books now and distribute a lot of people’s work and also put on a lot of concerts. It’s all been done with cash flow.

“I don’t think you could do Evos like that because you have no way of bringing in income. But if you did, if you had a publishing arm, for example, or if you could put out cassettes or a journal... but it’s hard just to break even. I think having a home is nice, and some kind of network. A year’s too short to build that up in a place that has no tradition of new music. People probably think, we’re going to the university and hear this concert that we hate, but these guys are all professors so it must be good music. We hate it but we’re paying our dues. It takes a couple of years to become the alternative. I think you just have to stick with it and be consistent — we’ve dealt with this at Mills for 30 years. Sometimes nothing happens. Messiah came out to Mills and played to 40 people. What do you do? What we’ve done is keep our publicity exactly the same every year. Every year we send out this giant poster and people know that they keep that poster on their... continued on page 4
ALEA's second concert

ALEA's second concert 'Amores' will be on Sunday December 4 at Christ Church Grammar School (8pm). For this programme ALEA regulars Paul Tanner, Cathie Travers and Lindsay Vickery will be joined by guitarist/percussionist Craig Ogden.

The title track is the much celebrated work by John Cage for three percussionists and prepared piano. Amores will be joined by four eccentric descendants by British composers Chris Hobbs and John White.

Despite this overseas content, the concert is still about 85% Australian (by weight), with works by Keith Humble, Michael Smetanin, Paul Tanner and Lindsay Vickery. Tickets are available at the door, from Evos (227 8932) or the Octagon (380 2440).

Calling all scores

EVOS is setting up a library/archive of works by Western Australian Composers (past and present). The venture will aim to contain not only scores/recordings (as applicable) but also parts, biographies, programme notes and dates and descriptions of performances where none of the above exist.

Contemporary Wind Ensemble
Looking For New Works

CATHY Hope will be forming a contemporary wind ensemble next year and is looking for new works for 5 or more players. Please call Cathy on 227 9470 if you are interested.

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Larry Polansky

refrigerator all year and that has a complete listing. So we get the same couple of hundred people at every concert, but they also know that they're going to get that poster in September and if they don't get it they call up. I think the simpler the better — you can get really innovative and do different publicity things each year, but you don't reach large numbers of people that way. And stick around long enough to become an institution.

"Five years is a very minimal amount of time to become the thing in a city. You need international attention and you only do that by being around long enough. When I go back to the States many more people will know you're here but it takes many years to reach the stage where you can't be gotten rid of. I'm in a place with 30 years' history and it's still difficult, but there's no way you could get rid of the Centre for Contemporary Music because it's been there too long. It'll always survive and I think — who was it who said the best way to become a good composer is to live longer than everybody else? And it's true. If you just hang out long enough you're going to be important just by virtue of the fact that very few people do that. It's just stamina. You have to just stick it out, develop survival mechanisms. If you guys can do it, financially, then why not do it?

"I think it's a myth that you want to bring new music to the masses. By it's very nature it's going to interest only a few. If you can get 150 people along to every concert you're doing wonderfully. If you have any more than that you'll have the people you've already convinced and a few of their friends. The best you can hope for is to change the minds of some relatively intelligent people who have made the wrong decision. A lot of people have made the right decision. They don't like new music and that's the right decision for them. It holds no interest for them and it never will. But a few people — mainly other artists and your average intelligent person — may think they're not interested and for them it may be the wrong decision. Those are the people whose minds you want to change. If you can get people who are not musicians or composers to like it then you've succeeded wildly. If you hit a higher bar that you're looking at a totally different audience. You could bring in Philip Glass and really pack the place, but then you'd be talking about very big budgets and you'd be arts promoters. That's very different from being an experimental new music organisation, bringing in people like me, or Jan Williams, and staying alive. It means you're injecting new life into the arts of the city. That's very important. The argument we sometimes use at Mills is there's no way to make Oakland have a ballet that will rival San Francisco. What we can do is make it the centre for small electronic music.

"In the same way Evos could become one of the five or ten most interesting experimental arts organisations in the world."

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☐ PROMOTING CONTEMPORARY MUSIC IN WA ☐