

Decibel New Music in partnership
with the Sir Zelman Cowen School
of Music presents

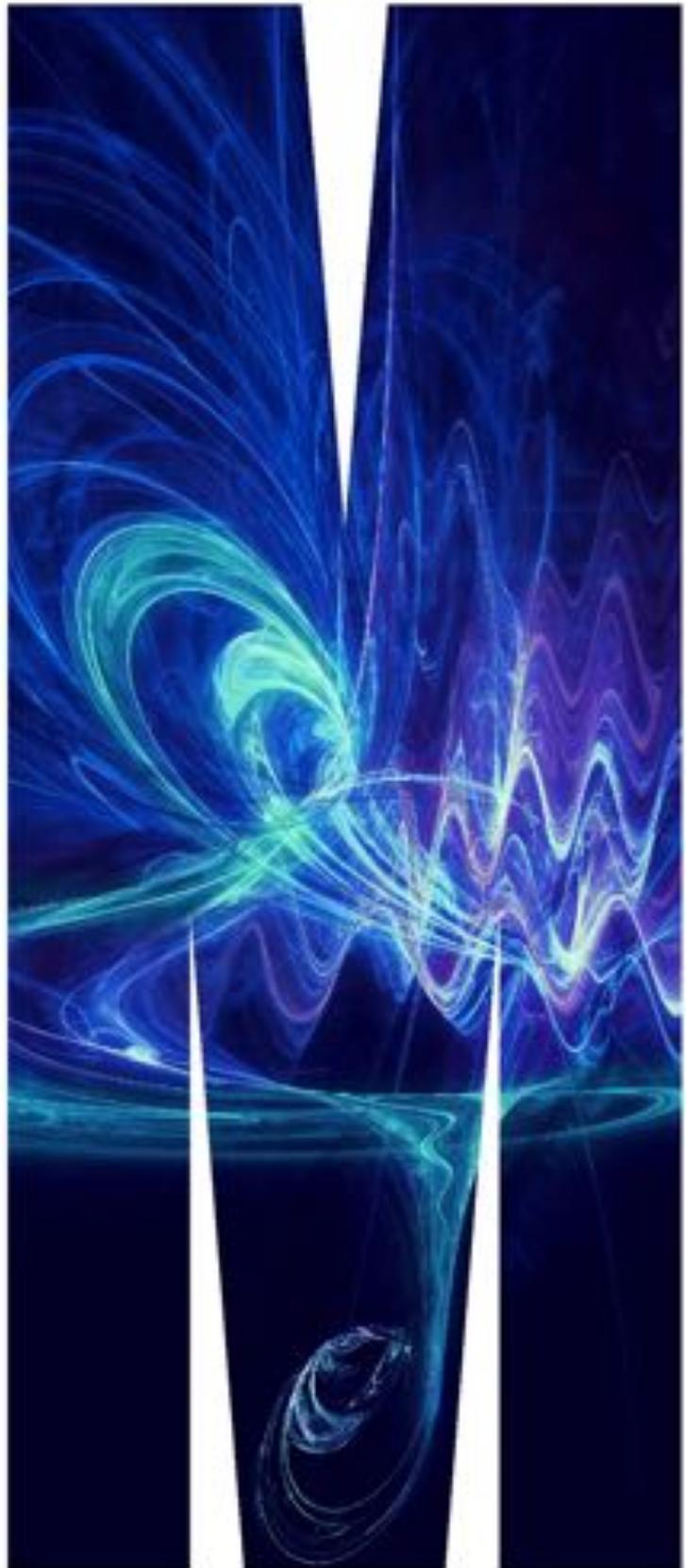
After Julia

Decibel

**SIR ZELMAN COWEN
SCHOOL OF MUSIC**

Monday July 10, 2017 • 7:30pm
Music Auditorium
Building 68, 55 Scenic Blvd
Monash University, Clayton

This is a free Sound Series
concert. For more information on
upcoming concerts visit
arts.monash.edu/music



1. **Gail Priest** – *Everything and Nothing*
for alto flute, clarinet, viola, cello, vibraphone and electronics.

2. **Thembi Soddell** – *Your Sickness is Found in My Body*
for bass flute, bass clarinet, cello, viola, percussion, piano and electronics.

3. **Cat Hope** – *Tough it Out*
for ensemble and electronics.

4. **Cathy Milliken** – *Schiffrori*
for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, harmonicas and electronics

5. **Michaela Davies** – *Goldfish Variations*
for goldfish and two performers.

INTERVAL

6. **Laura Jane Lowther** – *Loaded. [NSFW]*
for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, vibraphone, keyboard and electronics

7. **Kate Moore** – *Oil Drums*
for alto flute, clarinet, cello, violin, organ, percussion and playback.

8. **Andrée Greenwell/Hilary Bell** – *Arrows I, II*
for 6 voices, alto sax, violin, cello, bass guitar, synth, piano and percussion.

"My essential view was that it was because I'm the first woman, I'm unusual, and it will wash itself out of the system. It didn't." Julia Gillard, 2014.

Personally, the period that Julia Gillard was prime minister of Australia was a turning point for me. I wouldn't have called myself a feminist - I thought that work had been done. But as events unfolded during her term, and I heard the words of parliamentarians, journalists and callers on talkback radio, I realised I was wrong. That work hadn't been done. I found out I am a feminist - because I believe men and women deserve equal opportunity and respect. Australia wasn't ready for a woman in the 'top job' and it was quite shocking just how we were not ready. Things would be said that just wouldn't have been if it was a man in that position, and I spent a lot of time pondering this - it was difficult to believe this was happening in the place I lived and worked. There seemed to be something of a groundswell of agreement on the issue amongst those around me - men and women - and I started to look differently at what was happening in my own experience. I never felt that I was offered less opportunities as a woman, but was surprised to find that pay equity is still a massive issue in Australia (Natsem 2009, ABS, 2013). Whilst there are many women composers active in Australia, very few of them appear in concert programs (Macarthur, 2013). In 2013, an article by Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho expressed similar concerns - she thought things hadn't improved for women composers in recent years (2013). Somehow, all this information was almost invisible to me before now, while I was busy 'getting on with it'. I realised that perhaps I had to try harder to be inclusive in Decibel programs, because women's work is not always as easy to find. This experience of a female prime minister in Australian life had opened an awareness for me, and as it turned out, for many women - and led to the idea for this concert.

What if a group of composers responded to this cultural shake-up? I asked women because I felt this was a topic most pertinent to them, and it now seemed that the time had come for women to regroup again. How would a group of women composers 'sound out' a response to this important time in Australia's cultural history? Commissioning work is an adventurous business - you open up for a wide range of possibilities, and the group of composers represented here come from a broad range of style and opinion. Each composer was asked to address the topic of the impact of and reaction to Julia Gillard's prime ministership in a piece of music for Decibel. Anything else to be said is in the works themselves. I thank the composers for their consideration and enthusiasm for this project, but I must especially thank you Julia Gillard, for opening up a debate that needed refreshing, who took flack from every angle, while really, just trying to do a job. This program was premiered in 2014. It feels even more relevant now.

Cat Hope, Artistic Director, Decibel

1. **Gail Priest** - *Everything and Nothing*

"The reaction to being the first female prime minister does not explain everything about my prime ministership nor does it explain nothing about my prime ministership." Julia Gillard, Legacy Speech, 26 June 2013

This sentence has stuck with me since that fateful evening back in 2013—as has Ms Gillard's tone of dignity during its utterance. While her "misogyny speech" is undeniably powerful, it takes a real strength of character to take defeat gracefully. To create this piece I typed in the above sentence on a standard computer keyboard with MIDI activated, and the resultant notes and gaps (not all letters on the QWERTY keyboard have musical notes assigned to them) became the basis for the melodic material. I then refined these rough patterns into melodic motifs and arranged them according to sonic and semantic intentions. Played by 'real' instruments this work sounds very different to my normal digitally manipulated output however behind the timbres my favourite compositional strategies—chance, reversals and decadent polyphony—remain.

Gail Priest is a Katoomba-based artist with a multi-faceted practice in which sound is the key material of communication and investigation. She has exhibited her own sound-based installation work at ISEA2016 Hong Kong, Werkleitz Festival - Germany, the Sonortetum, Kapelica Gallery, Slovenia, Tokyo Wonder Site, Artspace and Performance Space, Sydney. She has released several albums of exploratory music through her own label Metal Bitch as well as Flaming Pines and Endgame records. She has performed her electronic compositions extensively nationally and internationally including in London, Venice, Amsterdam, Helsinki, Akureyri (Iceland), Berlin and Bourges. She is also a curator and writes extensively about sound and media arts, in particular for RealTime magazine, as well as being the editor of *Experimental Music: audio explorations in Australia* through UNSW Press (2009). She was the 2015/2016 Australia Council Emerging and Experimental Arts Fellow and in 2017 she is a commissioned artist for the upcoming Experimenta Make Sense exhibition (2017-2020).

www.gailpriest.net

2. Thembi Soddell - *Your Sickness is Found in My Body*

"We tested the model that sexist discrimination, measured by the Schedule of Sexist Events (SSE), would account for additional variance in women's physical and psychiatric symptoms, above and beyond that accounted for by generic stressors. ... [Sexist] discrimination accounted for more of the variance than did generic stressors in premenstrual, depressive, obsessive-compulsive, somatic, and total psychiatric and physical symptoms. These findings suggest that sexist discrimination plays a significant role in women's most prevalent symptoms." Landrine et al., (1995), *Physical and Psychiatric Correlates of Gender Discrimination*.

Thembi Soddell (b. Australia 1980) is a sound artist, electroacoustic composer and practice-led researcher with an interest in psychology, perception, subjectivity and emotion in relation to intense encounters with sound. Her distinct approach to composition exploits dynamic extremes, creating volatile, evocative sound experiences with a disquieting edge. She creates works for recording, installation and performance — including two solo CD releases (with a third planned for late 2017), presentations at Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and City Gallery Wellington, and two European tours in a duo with cellist Anthea Caddy. Since 2010 she has been engaged in practice-led research at RMIT University, focusing on the articulation of firsthand experiences of mental illness, trauma and psychological distress using sound art practice. She also works as sound designer and dramaturg for theatre and dance and has guest curated for the National Gallery of Victoria. Her work has been described as "extremely accomplished" (Diffusion) and inducing of "psychological terror" (Real Time Arts). Soddell lives in rural Victorian town, Clunes. <http://thembisoddell.com>

3. Cat Hope - *Tough it Out*

'Tough it out' is a phrase Julia Gillard used to describe her way to negotiate the obstacles on her way to implement her policies and simply 'work' at her job of Prime Minister. It seemed impossible to hear about what Gillard was doing as prime minister because there was just so much noise and interference. This concept of trying to continue doing something you have been trained to do, through all kinds of railroading, is used as a structural device in this piece. The ensemble may choose any score of Hope's to play, or the score provided, which uses popularity graphs of various Australian prime ministers over time. As it starts, it sounds like a 'typical' piece of Hope's but a set of recorded instructions and commentary designed to interrupt the reading, understanding and performance of the piece are sent to the performers over headphones. These are sent in an order and rate chosen during the performance, by the electronics operator. This piece was written during a Civitella Ranieri Fellowship.

Cat Hope is a composer, sound artist and musician based in Western Australia. Cat's composition and performance practices engage elements of low frequency sound, drone, noise, graphic notation and improvisation. She often makes use of electronics and unusual or invented instruments in her works, which have been performed at festivals internationally and broadcast on Australian, German, Italian, French and Austrian radio. She has been a songwriter with some 6 albums to her credit, playing in pop bands in Germany, Italy and Australia in the 1990s. In 2013 she was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to study digital graphic music notations internationally as well undertake residencies at the Visby International Composers Centre, Sweden, Civitella, Italy and the Peggy Glanville Hicks House in Sydney in 2014. www.cathope.com

4. Cathy Milliken - *Shifrorl*

Shifrorl is a reflection on leadership, the title itself being a contraction of "She-for-All". *Shifrorl* begins with simple musical cells that suggest the finality of a funeral bugle call and Julia Gillard's relating of Paul Keating's statement to her after losing the leadership ballot, "We all get taken out in a box, love". Later entries by the piano and percussion suggest calculated oppositional forces, which persist then later die away as the focus centres on a more personal dialogue between flute and percussion. The work has three possible endings, of which the ensemble must choose one. I wish my piece to be understood as my reflection on leadership generally, but also particularly on Julia Gillard's leadership, her persistence and courage and my wish to pay tribute to her and to her continuing work. Shifafutcha.

Cathy Milliken completed her music degree in Australia majoring in performance (piano and oboe) and continued her studies in Europe with Heinz Holliger as well as completing her studies in the Dalcroze Method of teaching music. As a founder member of the Ensemble Modern, Germany, she has worked with leading composers and conductors of this century including Pierre Boulez, Peter Eötvös, Frank Zappa, György Ligeti and Karlheinz Stockhausen (who produced her performance of "Spiral" on CD -Stockhausen Verlag nr. 45). She has composed for theatre, opera, radio, film and created installations and received commissions from the Berliner Staatsoper, Staatstheatre in Darmstadt, South Bank Centre London, the ZKM (Centre for New Media) Karlsruhe, The Experimental electronic Studio of Freiburg, as well as the CCMIX(enakis) Centre in Paris. Awards include "Prix Marulic". She was Director of Education for the Berlin Philharmonic from 2006-2012 and is now on the creative advisory team for the Münchener Biennale Festival. She lives in Berlin, sharing her time between composing, performing and directing international creative participatory projects. www.cathymilliken.com

5. Michaela Davies - *Goldfish Variations*

Goldfish Variations is a rule-based score comprising a set of instructions for two performers, where the musical outcome is determined by the movements of a goldfish. Some parameters are pre-determined (e.g. performers must choose notes from the same whole tone scale), while other parameters (e.g. pitch, articulation and dynamic variation), are determined by the movements of the goldfish. Visible to the outside world but separate from it, the goldfish goes about its goldfish activities, unaware that its actions are being interpreted by its observers to create outcomes beyond its control.

Michaela is a cross-disciplinary artist working with installation, sculpture, sound, performance and video. A doctor of psychology, her practice is informed by an interest in the role of psychological and physical agency in creative processes and performance, and how obstruction can change the trajectory of both individual development and creative outcomes both in and beyond the context of musical performance. Her recent work has used electric muscle stimulation and other methods to both obstruct and extend human capabilities and musical possibilities in composition and improvisation, with performances internationally and throughout Australia including Experimental Intermedia (New York), ISEA13 (Sydney), Mona Foma Festival (Hobart), Museum of Contemporary Art (Australia), Institute for Cultural Enquiry (Berlin) and Sonica festival (UK). www.michaeladavies.net

6. Laura Jane Lowther - *Loaded*. [NSFW]

Emotionally charged headlines have always been used to cause shock and provocation. Now click bait and intentionally misleading words can lead to inaccurate assumptions about everything from local news to global events. We use them to filter out what is worthy of our reading time, often procrastinating on our laptops, needing to feel 'up to date' but ending up reading stories about talented animals. In *Loaded*. [NSFW], the soundscape is created by the emotional response of the players to the headlines. The quotes have been curated from recent online media, you may even recognise some. The piece slowly builds to a cacophony of sounds that both agitate and comfort the audience, like elevator music made from the barrage of notification and computer sounds coming from a busy office.

Laura Jane Lowther is a composer from Perth, Western Australia and a graduate of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in Composition and Music Technology. Most notably she is the vocalist and producer of the electronic pop act, KUCKA, who have been making waves both nationally and internationally in the popular music industry. Laura's work often blurs the lines between music and fine art; she has composed for theatre, chamber ensembles, contemporary dance productions, and has created interactive sonic art installations for major arts institutions. This piece was commissioned through the Difficult Commission, an initiative supporting the creation of new work by Western Australian composers for the Decibel New Music Ensemble.
kucka.net

7. Kate Moore - *Oil Drums*

A recurring nightmare:
The sound of drills and oil drums across a barren desert; And that voice - a cry - a song from a forgotten memory. Delphi has an oracle for you.
What are you going to do when all is said and done?
The world is in shatters.
They're coming for the treasure you hold
(The moguls and the monopolies).
It isn't pretty.
The black ocean sucks and sucks,
Pulling ever towards that final wave
That will stop your heart,
Soak your lungs,
Blind your vision.
Is this your oracle?
Young land far away;
Free from war, famine and disease.
Is this not the terror
You are running from?

Kate Moore (b. 1979) is an Australian musician and composer of new music based in the Netherlands. In 2017 she was the recipient of the Matthijs Vermeulen Prize, the most prestigious Dutch prize for composers. Her major work *Sacred Environment* was premiered by The Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and choir with soloists Alex Oomens and Lies Beijerinck during The Holland Festival Proms at The Concertgebouw and she has recently been awarded an APRAMCOS Art Music Fund commission to continue her research. Her works have been released on major labels including Grammy and Eddison nominated album *Dances and Canons*, released on ECM New Series. Active on the international scene, Moore has had works performed by acclaimed ensembles including ASKO/Schönberg, the Bang On A Can All-Stars and The Song Company and is featured at major festivals including The Holland Festival, ISCM World Music Days 2010 and MATA 2009.
www.katemoore.org

8. Andrée Greenwell (composer), Hilary Bell (lyricist) - *Arrows I, II*

I was overwhelmed by the volume of gendered abuse directed toward our nation's prime minister, Julia Gillard, so incisively compiled in Anne Summer's speech "Her Rights at Work: The political persecution of Australia's first female prime minister". If this information had the media coverage it deserved, would it alter the hopes of young women who aspired to significantly and positively contribute to our society in the future? And where would that leave Australia in terms of eventually becoming a nation of true equality? I wanted to respond to Decibel's invitation to contribute to the program *After Julia* using words and the voices of young women, so I thank writer Hilary Bell for her research and wisdom in this process. I would like to thank the vocalists who have generously participated in this project.

Andrée Greenwell is a multi-award winning composer who has written for Australia's leading performing arts organisations - for theatre, orchestra, film, dance, concert, television, radio and installation. She is a leading creator of music theatre, notably *The Hanging of Jean Lee* and *Dreaming Transportation*, both adapted from poetic works by Jordie Albiston, which were staged at the Sydney Opera House, Sydney Festival, and Arts House, North Melbourne; and recorded and broadcast by the ABC Radio National Music and Drama Units. Andrée holds a Doctorate in Creative Arts from the University of Wollongong.

Hilary Bell is a playwright and librettist, whose work has been performed around Australia and internationally. She is also author of the best-selling book 'Alphabetical Sydney'.

Decibel are a Western Australian based new music ensemble maintaining a focus on the combination of acoustic and electronic instruments, as well as innovating music notation. The ensemble has collaborated with composers such as Eliane Radigue, Werner Däfeldecker, Agostino Di Scipio, Alvin Curran, David Toop, Marina Rosenfeld, Lionel Marchetti, Andreas Weixler and Johannes S. Sistermanns and worked with iconic Australian composers Jon Rose, Alan Lamb, Ross Bolleter, Warren Burt, Eric Griswold and Anthony Pateras. They support new Australian music through commissioning and the performance of historic works.
www.decibelnewmusic.com

Decibel:

Cat Hope – artistic director, flutes, bass guitar
Lindsay Vickery – reeds, electronics
Stuart James – keyboards, programming, electronics
Tristen Parr – cello
Aaron Wyatt – violin, viola and ipad programming
Louise Devenish – percussion

Special guests:

Vocalists – Andrée Greenwell, Deborah Kayser, Emily Schnell & Natasha Weatherill
Speakers – Alma Zygiel & Marcia Ferguson

Technical and Support:

Technical – Karl Willebrant
Event staff – Cameron Smith
Decibel management – Gabrielle Sullivan, Yolande Pickett
Monash Concerts Coordinator – Johannes Luebbers