TURA NEW MUSIC PRESENTS THE 9TH
TOTALLY HUGE NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL

10-20 SEP 2009
PERTH, AUSTRALIA
TURA.COM.AU
Tura New Music and WAAPA@ECU present

TAPE IT

DECIBEL

(Perth)

Decibel is Perth’s freshest new music ensemble devoted to the nexus of acoustic and electronic instruments. The group was formed out of a desire to perform a range of music where electronic and acoustic instruments feature side by side and is dedicated to Australian music and emerging Western Australian composers.

This concert focuses on works that involve acoustic instruments playing with the ‘tape’ as another instrument. The group works on this concept in a number of ways: literally on tape, CD, with sampler, turntable or computer. The performance features works written for Decibel by Warren Burt and a commission, from emerging Western Australian composer, Dan Thorne.

Cat Hope (musical director, flute and electronics), Lindsay Vickery (reeds and electronics), Stuart James (piano and electronics), Malcolm Riddoch (guitar and electronics), Rob Muir (sound design), Tristen Parr (cello) and Dan Russell (violin).

Program

Michel van der Aa Oog for cello and interactive CD
Warren Burt Letters (world premiere)
Ernie Althoff Front Row
William Burroughs Electronic Revolution
Brian Eno Music for Airports
Lindsay Vickery Transit of Venus
Cat Hope In the Cut (world premiere)
Mauricio Kagel Prima Vista
Dan Thorne We'll Never Know (world premiere)

Decibel is supported by the State Government of Western Australia through the Department of Culture and the Arts.
FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

TAPE IT
Decibel
Premiere performance of Perth's newest new music ensemble.
An electro acoustic adventure.
Including works by WA composers Vickers, Thorne, Mustard and Hope.
WA ACADEMY OF PERFORMING ARTS: WHAT'S ON

DECIBEL - Tape It!
The 9th Totally Huge New Music Festival presents an electro-acoustic adventure featuring works by Eno, Kagel, Van De Aa, Burroughs, Burroughs, Burt, Althoff, Hope, Vickery and Thorne.

Thurs 10 Sep

LINK Dance Company - Ripple Effect
Choreographed by Craig Barry and Michael Whaites
Tel. (08) 9370 6524 or www.waapa.ecu.edu.au

25 & 26 Sep
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Tel. (08) 9370 6594 or www.waapa.ecu.edu.au
The performance began with a working of a William Burroughs piece. The old beat writer had a penchant for chopping up his own words and rearranging them, delighting in the results of the reinterpreted meaning. Indeed, the chapters of his Naked Lunch masterpiece are only in that particular order because that’s how it was handed to the publisher. It was a fitting opening.

The inclusion of computer programs projecting instructions to the musicians raises a whole series of interesting ideas. Cat Hope’s In The Cut was the first instance of the performance being dictated by a random computer generated projection. Different coloured lines were projected onto the screen with each colour indicating a particular instrument. As the lines steadily scrolled along, the musicians interpreted the descending or intermittent lines on their instruments. Other pieces used arrows and icons to tell the musicians what to play. Watching these classically trained musicians taking cues from the screen is possible, and hopefully, the closest our culture will get to Rockband. Mozart, raising a lot more interesting ideas and music than that game ever could.

After the intermission, the room had changed around with three long tape loops now spanning the entire stage area. They were synchronously set off and the four musicians began at interpreting Brian Eno’s Music For Airports (1/1). It was only the second time the seminal tape piece has ever been performed and while the tape loop carried the main piano motif, Cat Hope’s flute and Tristan Parr’s cello were far in creating the right atmospheres around it.

The night featured pieces composed by the musicians themselves and closed with the premier performance of a new piece. Daniel Thomas’s We’ll Never Know was a piece as opposed to the improvised or computer generated experiments performed earlier. The musicians were linked with earphones and the delicate atmosphere of the piece closed the night perfectly. The pieces were sometimes challenging but raised a lot of interesting points about composition and the use of pre-recorded pieces as a medium, something ABC Classic FM clearly agreed with, recording the whole night for a broadcast in a classical version of the J’s Live At The Wireless to air down the track.
Electronic playback brings a charge to Decibel

CONCERT
Decibel
WA Academy of Performing Arts
Auditorium
Reviewer: William Yeoman

Decibel's musical director and
Rauter, Cut Hope.

In this opening concert of the 9th
Totally Hype New Music Festival,
new music ensemble Decibel
presented Face It, an intriguing
program of works that according
to the group's musical director and
founder, Cut Hope, demonstrate
many ways in which electronic
playback can be incorporated
into musical composition.

But tape is but just a feast
for the ears. Decibel's seven
members, for the most part,
dressed in black suits and ties,
were masquerading as a
circuitous mixture of acoustic and electronic
instruments and devices, including
violin, cello, flute, reel-to-reel tape
machines, portable cassette
players, tape decks, turntables and
laptops.

The result was a medley of
retro fashion and cutting-edge
technology, sound and visuals,
combining to take the audience
to a very strange place indeed.

The music itself ranged from the
fragmented soundscapes of William
Burrage's 1970's avant-garde piece Electronic
Inferno and the hectic intensity of Cut
Hope's "Study in Decline" to the cut for
turnable, bass guitar and acoustic
instruments to the analogy of Brian Eno's Music
For Airports and the medley humper
of Steve Roach's Humanities.

Row, in which Dan Rauter and
Tristan Rauter played it out with
their instruments such as plastic
trumpets and violins in response
to "visual scores" on cassette
players.

Surprisingly, one of the most
beautiful and traditional-sounding
works was also one of the newest.
Daniel Thurman's elegiac, We'll Never
Know, which was especially
commissioned by Decibel for
this concert.

Decibel wants to treat electronic
playback mechanisms as
instruments in their own right and
to explore repetitively by using
original technologies while
adapting the repertoire for such
works in drag.

This was its first performance; I
hope there are many more to
follow.

The Totally Hype New Music
Festival continues until September
30. Tonight at 7pm you can hear
the works of the best of WA's
young composers performed at
the Breaking Out Young Composers'
Night at the Western Australian
Museum Exhibition Gallery.
The Ninth Festival of Music Festival New Music Expression will open at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) on 17 September 2012 with the debut presentation of a new music ensemble, Fredilime in an electro-acoustic adventure...
SCENE STEALER: CAT HOPE

One of the pioneers of Perth’s now-fLOURishing new music scene, Cat Hope, divides her time between teaching as head of composition and music technology at WAAPA and performing in various bands. Most known for her work in bass-only noise group Abe Sada, she is artistic director of, and a performer in, Decibel, a group that combine electronic and acoustic instruments. Decibel play their second-ever concert at the UWA’s Cockburn Auditorium on November 18, which will feature an interpretation of The Gift by the Velvet Underground as well as works by John Cage, Laurie Anderson and others.

1. Low: Secret Name
2. Ennio Morricone: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly (04)
3. Scott Walker: Scott 3
4. The Butthole Surfers: Another Man’s Sac
5. Roland S. Howard: Teenage Snuff Film
SPLICE OF LIFE
BY UTILISING TAPE AND PRE-RECORDED TRACKS AS AN INSTRUMENT,
DECIBEL EXPLORE THE HISTORY OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC. JASON KENNY
DUSTS OFF HIS TAPE RECORDER.

In some ways," explains Decibel artistic director Cat Hope, “tape was what made electronic music interesting. Before people got into tape looping and splicing and playing with tape, it was pretty much about making machine instruments, like electronic organs. Apart from the theremin, electronic instruments are about reproducing instruments, whereas tape really turned composition into something quite malleable where you could make it long or short, play it slow or fast, and started this whole idea that music isn’t necessarily about instruments any more. That’s been a big influence on me and my own interest in music.”

In this new project, Decibel explore a theme with each performance. In this debut performance as part of Tura’s Totally Huge New Music Festival, the group look at tape as an instrument in their own compositions and also in recreating some of the more important tape music projects of the past.

“So we’ve got a William Burroughs piece on there because he was someone who looked at cutting up words as well as recordings. We’ve got Brian Eno and we’re doing Music For Airports, which I think is only the second time it’s been performed live in the world. We’re using some tape components and some live components as well, so some things are on laptop or on turntable and we’re looking at different ways of working with playback as instrument in its own right rather than something that produces an entire piece of music.”

A true pioneer in discovering what tape could achieve as a medium, Eno is almost necessary when looking at the history of tape as a compositional medium. “Brian Eno is someone interesting because he was someone who started making a mass number of loops, and it’s been interesting trying to negotiate his piece in particular because there are so many different ways you could do it. He did it with lots of different loops and the process of scoring it for the instruments and, having some parts of it on a loop and some parts of it played live, we’ve really learned a lot about the process that he used which I think it’s never been particularly clear. He’s never said much about it. There’s more to it than it seems. He pulls loops in and out of it in the middle of the mix and there’s quite a lot of post-production on that record. We’re sort of making it our own where we put part on a loop and part with live instruments.”

Anyone who’s familiar with Eno’s ambient projects knows it wouldn’t be an easy task to score that piece, working out what to put on tape and what to play live. The group have scored the various loops and found ways at reproducing them. “It’s not going to be a literal translation of it, it’s more like an interpretation of it in a way like how Eno would have created it because he would have recorded it and played all the instruments into it and made the loops. So it’s almost like half way through Eno’s process is where we’re presenting it rather than the finished produced product that you listen to on that record.”

Their own compositions also push what machines can bring to music with Hope’s own piece incorporating a record player and another piece using an interactive program that throws up pieces for the musicians to play. The staging of the show even stresses the machines as instruments. “I always knew that [staging it] would be one of the biggest challenges, and realising that if you’ve got a turntable or a computer then that’s an instrument and you’ve got a speaker and that’s its sound and it’s over there on the left, next to the cello player. Nothing’s coming through the PA in a mix, we’re not mic-ing up the instruments. Each instrument has its own voice whether that be a turntable, a laptop or a cassette player.”

WHO: Decibel
WHAT: Tape It
WHEN & WHERE: Totally Huge New Music Festival showcase – Thursday 10 September, WAAPA Music Auditorium, Mount Lawley
30 November 2009

Decibel

18.11. and 10.09.2009 // Perth // WA

by Kelly Curran and Ben Hamblin
The work bookended by the Lucier sonic explorations was a composition for ensemble by Pauline Oliveros - *Antiphonal Meditation* (1979). As with the earlier Bandt composition, this piece required heightened awareness and communication between players, but this score is comprised purely of written instructions and a diagram, as opposed to conventional music notation. Two groups of instrumentalists (or singers), in this case a) violin and cello, and b) flute and contrabass clarinet, face each other on stage. The first group is asked to 'spontaneously ... make a sound together,' which the other group should then echo or imitate. This was another delightfully unpredictable work. The alternated playing between the two groups produced a wide range of colour and effects, which were constantly transforming and developing, underpinned by manipulated samples on the laptop. In open ensemble works such as this, one of the challenges is when and how to conclude. Again demonstrating their well-honed communication between each other, the two groups began overlapping and ended together in a wild, unison flurry.

Grandfather of chance music and non-standard use of musical instruments, John Cage, applied many of his conceptual ideologies to the next work, *Cartridge Music* (1960). Here, the only instrument is the cartridge on the arm of a record player. Before the audience there were some tables in a semi-circular arrangement, behind which stood Hope, Riddoch and James. On the tables lay an assortment of objects, including the graphic score. Hope and Riddoch had a ball, using cartridges in as many ways as they could… except to play records. The cartridges and arms were connected by leads to individual speakers, so every noise was amplified. Some of the more outrageous and amusing uses were combing hair, brushing teeth and positioning a slinky into the cartridge. The performers couldn't help showing their enjoyment, with grins and smirks, which helped to connect to the audience, who were also highly entertained.

All six performers returned to the stage for the concluding work, a version of the Velvet Underground's *The Gift* (1968), reworked by Decibel for live ensemble and turntable. John Cale's narration of a short story, written by Lou Reed, from the original recording, began playing on the turntable. While not attempting to pick up every word and meaning of this spoken text, I was more appreciating its sonic contribution to the overall texture. The cello set up a bass riff, joined by small drum kit, then the piano commenced repeated quavers. Violin soon joined the mix, adding a few variations to its ostinato. Finally, Vickery added his alto saxophone to the established groove, interjecting with some very high, sustained and squeaky notes imitating the electronic feedback from the original. The ensemble continued to maintain a tight, steady pulse until the end of the spoken voice on record, as the evening concluded with an understated click.

Suited up in black and white, a la *Reservoir Dogs*, the cool characters of Decibel presented a stimulating, mind-expanding program that will not be soon forgotten. The choice and order of repertoire was a particular strength of the concert, performed to world-class standard. Instruments were played and played with; listeners' pre-conceived notions of music were put to the test; works were experienced with more than just the ears. This was a concert which succeeded in being challenging, without being inaccessible. I only hope that this was not a one-off, and that Decibel bring the *Somacoustica* program to more audiences near and far. I am most eager to attend the next concert offering by this ensemble in 2010.

**Tape It (10 September 2009)**

By Ben Hamblin

There was something alluring about sitting in a classical music auditorium scattered with amplifiers, studio monitors, leads, projectors, cables, and, best of all, reel-to-reel tape players; it gave that feeling of anticipation about what the newly formed ensemble, Decibel would produce. Composer Cat Hope directs and performs in the ensemble that is made up of a great range of Perth talent, including Dr...
Malcolm Riddoch, Lindsay Vickery, Stuart James, Tristen Parr, Rob Muir and Dan Russell; a combination of great instrumental performers and intuitive electronic musicians.

The Ensemble's inaugural performance also corresponded with the opening night of the Totally Huge New Music Festival, run by Tura New Music - a ten-day new music festival featuring works of various artists from around the world. Decibel seemed to sum up the festival, with an auspicious mix of music from new music pioneers, through to local works, including a commissioned work by WAAPA composer in residence, Daniel Thorne.

The concert kicked off with a modern interpretation of William Burroughs, *Electronic Revolution*. Following the idea by Burroughs, Decibel cut up TV news reports from a current affairs program. With the video of the news report playing on a small TV without any visual manipulation, the accompanying audio gradually degraded, from audible news reports about the swine flu epidemic into a dense layering of conventional electronic manipulation.

Spatial aesthetic was tested in Warren Burt's *Another Noisy Lullaby*, a work written especially for Decibel. With Tristan Parr on cello positioned to the side of the audience, and Lindsay Vickery perched up behind the audience on bass clarinet, the performance also included Cat Hope (flute) and Dan Russell (violin), with no one as the central focus of the work in spatial performance array. Each player was equipped with a tape player, playing faint electronic sounds on cassette tapes. The minimal lighting of the music stand lights alone aided the audience's attention to sound, which heightened the delicate piece. The timbral qualities of the four instruments at extremely quiet dynamics made for a really alternate atmosphere. Often new music falls into a situation of loudness, whereas in this case, Burt has used restrained dynamics to create a wonderful sensation of spatial delicacy.

A recurring theme of the night, possibly not intended as a focal theme, was the projection of scores onto a screen. Often acting as a master score for the players to follow, the projections allowed the audience to (attempt to) follow the players. However, in many cases, graphic scores proved difficult to follow from an audience perspective and seemed to deter from the incredible improvising from the ensemble. The first piece to benefit from the projected score was ensemble director, Cat Hope's new work *In The Cut*. With a score that outlined a steady decline as its macro-structure, microstructurally it included some wonderfully subtle interaction between performers. With a variety of acoustic instruments, as well as a bass guitar, and turntable, the piece successfully narrates a seemingly basic structure that is transformed into the piece's conceptual idea, degradation.

Mauricio Kagel's piece *Prima Vista* was another projected score piece, with the ensemble split into two groups of three. Perhaps the most complex score of the night to follow, the piece featured two separate scores for each ensemble, with numerous instructions sprawled across the scores. The piece was written for 'slide pictures and undefined sound sources' and Decibel modernised it into a self-automated score projection. Sonically, the piece was intriguing, with a seemingly indeterminate structure making for an ever-progressing, shifting structure.

I'm not sure how many exact interpretations of Brian Eno's music for airports have been attempted since tape machines have slowly been phased out, but Decibel not only attempted it, they pulled it off marvellously. Returning from the interval to see three tape loops stretched across the entire stage gave a sense of nostalgia, and for those who knew the piece, a sense of interest to see how Decibel could perform a live interpretation of a studio project by Eno. *Music for Airports* was composed as a piece of unobtrusive music, designed as a soothing, low-volume work. Decibel transformed the work into a live scenario, and added a live trio to the tape loop recordings of that same group. As the tape machines cranked into action, the warm, gentle sounds of the tape reels washed through the auditorium, as the three tapes rustled their way around the reels. The trio were careful not to overpower the loops as they subtly interacted with they're own tape loop recordings. The ensemble
performance was as 'tape-esque' as it could be, and created a beautiful melding of tape and instruments that sent the audience into a meditative state, only broken with the clunk of the stop button to halt the tape reels at the conclusion of the performance.

Transit of Venus, a new work by Lindsay Vickery, composed for three acoustic instruments and electronics was another excursion into the world of indeterminacy; a piece with a self-automated score and a click track. For the night, it was for alto flute, violin and cello. With the players having to follow exact instructions on a projected score, being chosen at random by the laptop, the piece formed its own performance-unique structure. As John Cage insisted, nothing is silence, and (even if unexpectedly) Vickery's piece briefly passed through passages of silence that acted as subtle additions to overall structure. Cat Hope, Tristen Parr and Dan Russell performed this piece with amazing detail, adhering to the projected instructions with such passion that gave the piece a fascinating shape.

The penultimate piece almost turned into a bit of a comedy routine between Dan Russell and Tristen Parr. The piece by Ernie Althoff, Front Row is an interesting investigation into alternate methods of 'scoring' a piece. The performance saw Cat Hope, Malcolm Riddoch and Stuart James sitting in the audience with individual tape players that acted as audio-cues for the performers on stage. Dan and Tristen were equipped with a series of musical toys and percussion instruments that were to be played upon cue from the tape players. The interaction reached two levels, the interaction between tape and performance, and the interaction between the two performers.

Dan Thorne's new work We'll Never Know was an exploratory look into the combination of live performance with pre-manipulated recordings. With the live trio receiving input through headphones to stay in time, Dan managed to juxtapose processed samples of instruments against a live version of themselves. The work digressed beautifully into a wash of complex timbre between the live ensemble and the backing track. With auditory similarities to the works of Steve Reich and Michael Nyman, Thorne created a wonderfully crafted electro-acoustic work that capped off a delightful night, exploring the possibilities of acoustic instruments and electronics.

**Event details**

Decibel: SomAcoustica  
Works by Vickery, Bandt, Hope, Linz, Lucier, Anderson, Cage, Oliveiros, The Velvet Underground  
presented by Tura New Music  
Callaway Music Auditorium, Crawley, WA  
18 November 2009  
[More details](#) in the AMC Calendar

Decibel: Tape It  
Works by Vickery, Althoff, Burt, Hope, Thorne  
presented by Totally Huge New Music Festival & Tura New Music  
WAAPA Music Auditorium, Perth, WA  
10 September 2009  
[More details](#) in the AMC Calendar

**Further links**

[Decibel](http://decibel.waapamusic.com/)  
[Tura New Music](http://www.tura.com.au/)

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Kelly Curran has recently completed her Bachelor of Music (Hons) at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, majoring in composition. Several of her chamber works have been performed around Perth, and she has also composed for dance and film. She was recently nominated for a West Australian Screen Award for best score for the short film Silent Beauty. She is currently researching postmodern approaches to chamber music.

Ben Hamblin is an electronic musician and composer from Perth, WA. He is currently in his last year of the Bachelor Of Music (Music Technology) course at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. He composes spatial, atmospheric, electroacoustic music, either in live performance or non-realtime production. Ben is interested in the idea of using limited sound sources to create pieces of vast depth and obscurity; testing the inaudible structure of a sound.
Karlheinz Stockhausen's work will be at the heart of a contemporary fine music festival in Perth. Rosalind Appleby reports.

Ensemble Offspring, Kontakte: After the success of Stockhausen's Kontakte at PIFAS this performance of Kontakte in the intimacy of the WA Museum will be sure to sell out. (WA Museum, September 16)

Decibel, Tape II: The cream of Perth's new-music scene unite to Decibel, using old and new instruments with acoustic and electronic instruments to perform music from the 1960s alongside three world premieres. (WAAPA Music Auditorium, September 10)

Gabriella Smart, Chinese Whisper: Recently returned from a tour of China, this harpist and director of Adelaide's Soundstream Festival has prepared a program of Chinese and Australian composers. (WA Museum, September 13)

Ensemble Offspring, Kontakte. Photo: Ross Potter

Jazzy: Swiss sound artist Giles Aubry.

For sponsors: Perth's freshest new music group Decibel.

Don't Miss These Huge Highlights

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Come Hither Noise: Thomas Meadowcroft's Mousetrap VR maze and Mark Bower's haunting response to the South Fremantle Power Station feature in this exhibition of sound. (Fremantle Arts Centre until September 20)

Fremantle Symphony Orchestra, The Warriors: David Pye's traditional sounds, synths and Australian indigenous sounds, these will be the hit with Perry Cloud's electro-groove the Warriors. (WAAPA Music Auditorium, September 13)

Sound Outing: Improvised music and sound art from Swiss composer Giles Aubry. (Tattah Kerri Lin and festival artist, Jeremy Pearson, Ellington Jazz Club, September 17)

Ruined Piano Sanctuary Tour: Composer Ross Doolan conducts a tour of Warrandyte Olive Grove, the final resting place of his beloved ruined pianos. (York, September 20)

Ruined Piano Sanctuary in York will reflect new music in all its diversity. The festival will culminate in a concert broadcast live with video feed from Perth's ABC studio as part of Classic FM's New Music Up Late show.

Festival details: bars.com.au

Making Kontakte: The high profile Ensemble Offspring.

New music: Ross Doolan's Ruined Piano Sanctuary in York.