

Tura and PICA
in association with
The New Music Network
present

**SCALE
VARIABLE
2015
CONCERT
3**

**SATURDAY 5
SEPTEMBER 2015**
**PERTH INSTITUTE
OF CONTEMPORARY
ARTS**

ANIME DECIBEL

**PROGRAM
NOTES**

ANIME

- 1 Dane Yates - [under] (2015) **WORLD PREMIERE**
for ensemble and electronics
- 2 Lindsay Vickery - *...with the fishes...* (2015) **WORLD PREMIERE**
for string trio and electronics
- 3 Ryan Ross Smith – *Study no.48 [catalog1]* (2015) **WORLD PREMIERE**
for six instruments
- 5 Jonathan Mustard – *Primorph* (2015) **WORLD PREMIERE**
for ensemble and electronics

INTERVAL

- 5 Stuart James – *Existence éphémère* (2015) **WORLD PREMIERE**
for ensemble and electronics
- 6 Bergrún Snæbjörnsdóttir – *2 víti* (2013) **AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE**
for 2 electric guitars
- 7 Cat Hope – *Erst* (2015) **WORLD PREMIERE**
for ensemble and electronics
- 8 Felicity Wilcox – *EXIT* (2015) **WORLD PREMIERE**
for ensemble and playback

INTRODUCTION

It gives me great pleasure to present this program, 'Anime' – a concert exploring the concept of animated notation. Decibel has been working with this emerging form of music notation where graphic instructions are put into action through interactive computing, video and lighting, for some time. Animated music notation describes a particular approach to the representation of musical concepts, using graphic notation as a starting point. Graphic notation is the representation of music using visual symbols outside the realm of traditional music notation. This was a practice revived in the 1950s avant-garde music movement, and was more common in medieval times. It became popular in modern music at a time when composers were seeking more freedom in the notations they employed - not necessarily desiring to control every aspect of the work and looking for more accurate depictions of sound in their notation. Graphic notations are useful for works where traditional harmony or continuous rhythmic pulses are not a focus, and can describe the quality of sounds in a way traditional music notation cannot. Graphic notation can enable elements of improvisation, describe electronic sounds or programming instructions and be a useful method of enabling 'chance elements' in a piece.

Computers have given this method of notating music a new lease of life through the use of colour, interactive elements, programs that enable generative processes and much more. Animated notation, known as a dynamic form of music notation, captures these processes.

The concert tonight features a range of different approaches to animated notation, but is of course not exhaustive. Works by Wilcox and Mustard use fixed media - video - as a score, accompanied with instructions for performers on how the images are to be interpreted. Mustard's piece puts shapes 'on a stage' whose morphing requires performers to react quickly to instantaneous movements of the objects on the screen. Wilcox assigns pitches to letters, and uses video editing as a structural and rhythmic device. Ross Smith's score is created in a program that generates multiple versions of the compositional 'plan', one of which we are playing tonight. Snæbjörnsdóttir uses the score as lighting and notation simultaneously.

Many of works on tonight's program make use of the Decibel ScorePlayer, an iPad application developed by the ensemble to facilitate the reading of scrolling screen scores, and each composer uses the tool in a slightly different way. Vickery draws his score out of the images on the screen, but includes others that provide context for the work. Yates uses the score to notate unusual extended techniques, James to show the evolution of sound shapes, and Hope to enable the coordinated reading of complex arrangements of small dots. The Decibel ScorePlayer scores can be recognised by the left to right scrolling movement and yellow 'playhead' on the screen.

Decibel has worked with unusual score formats since their inception in 2009, and the Decibel ScorePlayer has developed out of this practice to facilitate an accurate coordination of ensemble performance for certain types of graphic scores. From commissioning animated notations from local composers (Cobilis, Blue) to adapting scores to the format (Cage, Scelsi, Grainger), the group has developed a level of expertise in the execution of music notated in this way that has garnered international attention. My recent Churchill Fellowship led me to visit a range of practitioners in Europe and the USA, seeking out some of the materials featured in tonight's concert.

I would like to personally thank the 'Difficult Commission' for their contribution to this evening's program and to all the composers who have contributed works and supported Decibel in their search for not what music is, but what it can be.

Cat Hope

Founder, Artistic Director, Decibel

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DANE YATES

[U N D E R] (2015)

FOR DECIBEL, CONDENSER MICROPHONES AND LAPTOP

In early 2015, it became apparent to the public of Australia that sexual abuse is carried out within offshore immigration detention centres and offshore immigration centres. The Human Rights Commission released its report, 'The Forgotten Children,' revealing more than two hundred incidents of sexual assault within a three-month period, several involving children. Moreover, this information was not revealed for seventeen months, willfully leaving victims in the same environment as their perpetrators. When Tony Abbott was asked to comment on the situation, he said, "Occasionally, I daresay, things happen". Self-harm and the mimicking of sexualised behavior have been documented in the children who were victims of these assaults. [under] is based on the feedback from these accounts of the victims at the detention centres, as described by leaks and human rights investigators who are routinely demonised for speaking out against these human rights violations.

Dane Yates is an emerging composer from Perth, focusing on electroacoustic works and collaboration between music, dance and film. His work deals with the timbral relationship between acoustic and electronic textures, leading to new and interesting music, also utilising graphic notation. His early career has led to several releases, with his 2014 recording "Rasasvada" being released worldwide on Twice Removed Record Company. Yates has worked extensively collaborating with dance, composing for dance works at the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts as well as King Street Art Centre, The Dolphin Theatre and The State Theatre Centre.

<http://daneyatescomposition.weebly.com>

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LINDSAY VICKERY

...WITH THE FISHES...(2015)

...with the fishes... is a sibling to my 2013 work for Decibel, *silent revolution*. As the title suggests (and despite the nod to *The Godfather*) the work is a reflection on the future of our oceans (as well as an acronym summing up the situation). Like *silent revolution*, a range of music notations (including fragments of Debussy's *La Mer* that wash through the score), are situated in the context of a collage of over 300 images and quotations by scientists, journalists and activists concerned with the state of things below the surface. These issues include the expansion of fossil fuel drilling into every ocean - including the arctic - rising sea-levels due to climate change, pollution from radiation leaks, jellyfish and algae blooms caused by fertiliser run-off, the thawing and release of ocean methane clathrate and the ever growing trash vortex. Although the predictions of the commentators quoted, such as Chris Hedges, Alan Weisman, Eric Grundhauser (Slate), Gwynn Guildford (Quartz) and Örjan Gustafsson differ, they range from severe to apocalyptic. ...with the fishes... began as an idea for a graphic novel I planned with my son Max and this idea also plays into the aesthetic of the work (and the quote about the fate of climate skeptics).

Lindsay Vickery is a founding member of Decibel. His current compositional preoccupations include the relationship between modes of presentation of the musical score and musical structure, between electronic/acoustic, composed/interactive and interpretative/improvisational approaches, as well as the history of "technologies" for contacting the dead. He writes and presents on a range of topics, most recently on the history of the "score", nonlinear music and the realisation of Cage's scores. To date he has performed at festivals in four of the seven continents. He is coordinator of Composition and Music Technology at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts at Edith Cowan University and holds an MMus (UWA) and PhD (QUT).

www.lindsayvickery.com

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RYAN ROSS SMITH

STUDY NO. 48 [CATALOG 1] (2015)

In this work, a sense of active stasis is achieved through the arbitrary but explicit temporality of closely but irregularly concatenated sonic events, each player operating autonomously, any apparent coordination no more than a chance occurrence. In preparation, each player constructs a catalogue of 15 distinct, primarily unpitched sonic events, each event corresponding to a single node in each player's respective notational aggregate. When the attack cursor reaches a node, the corresponding event is activated by the player. The duration of the piece is arbitrarily practical.

Ryan Ross Smith is a composer and performer currently based in Troy, NY. His music ranges from the pop and the rock [Power Player, Twin Thousands], to the functionally dependent [various music for modern dance, film, television and radio], and fre[(e)ak] fo[(r)m]lk [Stars like Fleas, Matt Lavelle, Zeena Parkins]. While these facets of Smith's musical life continue to some degree, his focus has shifted primarily to the development and research of animated notational practices, in particular to discover its potential for compositional innovation and invention. Smith has performed throughout the US, Europe and UK, including performances at MoMA and PS1 [NYC] and Le Centre Pompidou [Paris, FR], has had his music performed throughout North America, Iceland, and the UK, has presented his work and research at conferences including NIME and the Deep Listening Conference, and has lectured at various colleges and universities including Mills College, University of Utah-Salt Lake City, and the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Smith is currently collaborating on a series of generative operas with artist/composer K. Michael Fox. Smith earned his MFA in Electronic Music from Mills College in 2012, and is currently a PhD candidate in Electronic Arts at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY.

<http://ryanrosssmith.com>

JONATHAN MUSTARD

PRIMORPH (2015)

"Primorph", a contraction of 'Primitive Morphologies', was commissioned for Decibel Ensemble by Difficult Listening, RTRFM's contemporary art music program.

Primorph uses simple, geometric volumes - spheres, cubes and cones - and applies twists, bends, rotations and other distortions to create a myriad of constantly metamorphosing forms throughout the piece. The performers reflect these metamorphoses, transposing the visual changes into movements in sound across pitch, duration and timbral domains, oscillating between fairly strict criteria and more poetic interpretations. The piece represents a continuation of the composer's previous work in the transposition of movement in space to sound where dancers have been the moving objects from which the sound derives its motion over time. The animation created for the piece also reflects this previous work in the theatrically staged setting of its five moving objects, each of which is identified with a particular instrument.

Jonathan Mustard lives and works in Perth as a freelance composer / musician and has gained a reputation as one of Perth's most innovative composers writing many works for mixed media, as well as more traditional pieces for dance, theatre, concert and stage. He has written music for dance since 1989 and is active in the field of hybrid arts, performance and theatre and is regularly commissioned and performed in Western Australia and overseas. His collaboration with Chrissie Parrott began in late 2002 with the Link Dance Company and has been followed each year by an ever-growing repertoire of diverse creations. Since 2004, his endeavours with technologies connecting video, dance and sound have generated a raft of compositions, dance pieces and performances exploring the organic and non-linear connections between these media.

http://www.chrissieparrottarts.com/Chrissie_Parrott_Arts/Jonathan_Mustard.html

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STUART JAMES

EXISTENCE ÉPHÉMÈRE (2015)

"We can, if we so choose, wander aimlessly over the continent of the arbitrary. Rootless as some winged seed blown about on a serendipitous spring breeze. Nonetheless, we can in the same breath deny that there is any such thing as coincidence. What's done is done, what's yet to be is clearly yet to be. In other words, sandwiched as we are between the "everything" that is behind us and the "zero" beyond us, ours is an ephemeral existence in which there is neither coincidence nor possibility." Haruki Murakami, *A Wild Sheep Chase*

Stuart James is a Western Australian composer, performer, and audio engineer who has been previously commissioned to write works by the ABC, Louise Devenish, Decibel Ensemble, Tetrafile Percussion, the West Australian Symphony Orchestra New Music Ensemble, and visual artist Erin Coates. Stuart's work has also been performed by the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra and Michael Kieran Harvey. Stuart has studied composition with American composer Allison Applebaum, British composer Anthony Payne (BBC),

Roger Smalley, Nigel Butterly, Lindsay Vickery, and Cathie Travers. Stuart won the state finals of the ASME young composers' competition, won the Dorothy Ransom composition prize whilst at UWA, and was also nominated for an Australian Music Centre Award for his percussion piece *Temperaments*. Stuart works as a full-time lecturer and tutor as part of the composition and music technology course at WAAPA, and the media faculty at Murdoch University. Stuart also operates his own commercial recording studio, The Soundfield Studio, and has recorded/mixed notable artists including ShockOne, Kele Okereke, JMSN, Ta-ku, Loston, and many others. Stuart also recently submitted his PhD involving new research in spatial audio and wave terrain synthesis.

<http://www.soundfieldstudio.com>

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BERGRÚN SNÆBJÖRNSDÓTTIR

2 VÍTI (2012)

Masculine choreography - part I

Bergún Snæbjörnsdóttir is a composer from Reykjavík, Iceland. In her work she often combines the visual and aural through some form of combined media. Her music has been performed by groups like the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra, Kubus and Duo Harpverk, in festivals such as Tectonics, Reykjavík and Glasgow, Cycle Arts and Music Festival, Dark Music Days, UNM festivals among others. As a hornstress, Bergún is active in the Icelandic music scene and has performed with musicians Björk, Sigur Rós and Of Monsters and Men.

<http://www.bergrun.com>

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CAT HOPE

ERST (2015)

An Erst is a term for the first swarm of bees. Ironically, it also means 'long ago' in old English - ironic because bee populations are dangerously low, a most likely consequence of matters such as the loss of flower meadows, mite attack, climate change, and the use of pesticides. Bees pollinate 70 of the around 100 crop species that feed 90% of the world. This piece uses the patterns created by Ersts as a score for the ensemble. It also uses compositional materials that turn multiple small parts into drones. Like the bee populations themselves, these patterns fade in and out, sometimes hard to see or hear, in amongst the noise, until they disappear all together. The score is a set of 'cards' that appear in a different order each time the piece is played, overlapping to create dynamic shapes. Coloured blocks indicate instructions for the electronics.

Cat Hope's music is conceptually driven, using mostly graphic scores, acoustic and electronic combinations as well as new score reading technologies. It often features aleatoric elements, drone, noise, glissandi and an ongoing fascination with low frequency sound. In 2013 Cat was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to study graphic notation internationally, and a Visby International Composers Centre residency in Sweden. Her practice has been discussed in books such as *Loading the Silence* (Kouvaris, 2013), *Women of Note* (Appleby, 2012), *Sounding Postmodernism* (Bennett, 2011) as well as periodicals such as *The Wire* (UK, 2013),

Limelight (Aus, 2012) and Neu Zeitschrift Fur Musik Shaft (Ger, 2012). Her works have been recorded for Australian, German and Austrian national radio and awarded a range of prizes including the APRA|AMC Award for Excellence in Experimental Music in 2011 and 2014. Cat was the Peggy Glanville Hicks Composer house resident in Sydney in 2014, and is a researcher at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.
<http://www.cathope.com>

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FELICITY WILCOX EXIT (2015)

Some thirty years ago, I took an overnight train from Paris to Italy and woke up to the sights and sounds of a new country. I had very little Italian back then, and this was the 80's, before English had overtaken the world. One sign I kept seeing at every stop was USCITA; I had no idea what this meant, nor why every station had this name. I guessed that USCITA must have been a very big city indeed, and only through keen observation did I come to understand...

EXIT, created for Decibel, is fondly based on this memory, and was shot and recorded on my iPhone6, on a series of train journeys around Italy this European summer. The letters of the word USCITA, which recurs through the piece like a refrain, have each been ascribed a single pitch of a whole-tone scale. Beyond that, I ask that you keenly observe and come to understand...

Felicity Wilcox is an interdisciplinary composer, pianist and vocalist, whose output encompasses concert music, film music, music for theatre, installation, live events, dance, radio, and band projects in songwriting and improvisation. She has received commissions for many innovative ensembles and festivals, including Vivid Sydney, Ensemble Offspring, Ironwood, Halcyon Ensemble, and the Australia Piano Quartet. Felicity's background as a screen composer informs her practice-based research into concert music for combined media. Her compositions have been performed across Australia, and broadcast nationally and internationally on radio and television, and in major film festivals including Berlin, New York, London, Paris, Venice, Tokyo and Toronto. Felicity currently lectures in composition for the moving image at Sydney Conservatorium.

<http://www.felicityfox.com.au>

DECIBEL ENSEMBLE

Cat Hope Artistic Director, flute, bass, electronics
Lindsay Vickery reeds, composition, score design, electronics
Stuart James piano, percussion, composition, electronics, MaxMSP, spatialisation
Tristen Parr violoncello
Aaron Wyatt violin/viola, iOS programming
Louise Devenish percussion
Sound Design Johannes Mulder
Technical Assistants Laura Halligan, Jean-Michel Maujean

Thanks to Scott Bishop and Karl Ford

www.decibelnewmusic.com/decibel-scoreplayer.htm

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