Welcome to the second of three concerts at PICA in 2011. Decibel has chosen the main gallery space of PICA to stage these concerts to engage with music that is not necessarily tied up with ‘concert’ conventions or specifications and enjoy the nature of PICA’s unique building and acoustic. Part of exploring the contemporary music composition has been with the very nature of instruments themselves, and once extended techniques reached the maximum effect possible, and the influence of art movements such as fluxus and dada reached music, composers began to use objects not usually associated with music creation to enable different sound worlds for music. Pretty Things features a selection of music with an emphasis on Western Australian works that make use of unusual items as musical instruments, instruments that have been altered by time or other interference, or instruments that may be thought of as ‘pretty things’ in their own right. It is notable how composers have responded to the ‘pretty things’ brief with ru...
Radio Music is a work composed using the chance operation technique pioneered by Cage. The 8 possible parts, of which Decibel will perform 5, indicate between 26 and 64 different frequencies between 55 and 156 kHz, notated using numbers which are projected during this performance. There are 4 sections with silences between them to be completed within 6 minutes. Decibel have created a system to randomly choose durations for the different ‘tunings’. The work was premiered by Cage himself with Maro Ajemian, David Tudor, Grete Sulf and the four members of the Juilliard String Quartet in 1957. Period analysis of the music of Cage from 1970–80 has been sourced for this performance, and whilst the audio material at the tunings selected would have changed since the piece was composed (as well as the country of performance), the replacement of analogue radio with digital will render this work unperformable.

Ross Bolleter (WA) is a improviser/composer who cut his teeth with 6 years as a pianist at the Parmelia Hilton in Perth. His performances often feature ruined piano improvisations laced with his stories and poems about the pianos, or other aspects of ruin. His CD releases include The Country of Here Below, (Tall Poppies, Sydney, 1994), Secret Sandhills and satellites (Emenan, London, 2006) and Night Kitchen: an hour of ruined piano, (Emenan, London, 2010). Crow Country, (Pogus, New York, 1999) was nominated as one of the 10 best albums of 1999 by New York’s Cadence Magazine. Ross Bolleter has five ruined pianos in his kitchen on which he improvises and records at night.

Christopher de Groot (WA) is a composer whose eclectic tastes have had him write music for a wide variety of ensembles from jazz big bands to full orchestras and electronics. De Groot has a keen interest in music for film, although he is not fond of the label ‘film composer’. This interest has led to numerous film scores, notably Sam Barrett’s film inspired by John Cage’snosferatu (1992) and Dimitri Kirsanoff’s Ménilmontant (1926/2009). In 2010 he composed a new spatial work, Sororal, for WASO’s Echo Chamber Orchestra and four prerecorded cassette tapes. De Groot has recently completed his Masters degree in composition and lectures part time at the Western Australian Academy Of Performing Arts (WAAPA).

Cat Hope (WA) is an accomplished composer, sound artist, performer, songwriter and noise artist whose practice is an interdisciplinary one that crosses over into video and multimedia installation. She has written numerous scores for classical and contemporary companies as well as film, and is a classically trained flautist, self taught vocalist and experimental bassist who plays as a soloist and as part of small ensembles, such as Gata Negra, Lux Manninho and Abe Sada. She tours often and her work is published worldwide. This year she was awarded a WA Artist Fellowship in the art, entertainment and culture category. She completed a PhD in Art at RMIT in 2010, and is currently on secondment as the CREATE Research Fellow at WAAPA, ECU.

Thomas Meadowcroft: Pretty Lightweight (2001)

In the title, ‘lightweight’ functions as ‘light’ (adjective) and ‘weight’ (noun). In this work, the performers play alongside a laughter track supplied by the composer. Although pre-recorded laughter is normally used to highlight jokes on television shows and in novelty tunes, the joke/laughter, stimulus/response model has been largely avoided here in attempt to get the music and the laughter to cancel each other’s ‘weight’ out. Decibel have created a score player especially that ties in the pre-recorded sound with the score, to assist accuracy in performance. A full page of the score features in Decibel’s book, Audible Designs.

Thomas Meadowcroft is an Australian freelance composer and musician who has lived in Berlin since 1998. He has on occasion used foreign or found objects (power tools, canned laughter, recordings of automobiles and BBQ areas etc.) as well as video projections (weather forecasts for the Mediterranean Sea, stills from children’s books) in improvisational with which he has been performed at various contemporary music festivals in Europe. His music has been commissioned by ensemble recherche, ELISION ensemble, KNM, and Les Percussions de Strasbourg. His scores are available through Plainsound Music Edition. Thomas Meadowcroft studied composition in the USA with George Crumb and Brian Ferneyhough.