Decibel + Pollen Trio
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Time       Saturday, May 14 · 7:30am – 10:30am
Location   Street Theatre, Canberra.
Created By Cat Hope, Shoeb Ahmad, Lindsay Vickery
More Info  Decibel perform a program of Lucier, Lamb, Hope and Vickery.
http://decibel.waapamusic.com/

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Cat Hope
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Peking Spring Festival: Decibel, Pollen Trio @ The Street Theatre, Canberra (14/05/11)

Local News by MarissaJade, 16th May, 2011

About The Author
MarissaJade joined us on the 28th Mar, 2010 and is a contributor.

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Peking Spring Festival: Decibel and Pollen Trio
May 14th, 2011
THE STREET THEATRE, CANBERRA

On a frosty, chilly Saturday night, the Peking Spring Festival was brought to a close in the rather quaint Street 2 at The Street Theatre.

The festival, presented by HellosQuare Recordings has had somewhat of a monopoly on live Canberra performances for the past three weeks, with shows featuring HellosQuare artists, plus guests taking place at venues such as the aforementioned Street Theatre, Smith’s Bookshop, ANU Bar, Bar 32 and The Phoenix. The aim of the festival was to showcase the very best in creative and experimental music, and if the final show on Saturday was anything to go by, the mission has well and truly been accomplished.

After milling about in the cosy foyer and trying to warm up blue, freezing hands, the crowd was ushered into the small theatre in order for the night to get under way. Upon sitting down in the rather intimate setting, I marveled at how nice it was, just this once, to get to see a gig without having to stand on tired feet while jostling with intoxicated fans. After all, every now and then it’s nice to indulge your inner grandma.

The night’s entertainment began with HellosQuare old hats Pollen Trio. One of the label’s first bands, Pollen Trio, are locals who play experimental jazz that is best heard to be appreciated. With an organ, a trumpet, drums, and other bits and bobs, Pollen make music that on paper sounds like a cacophonic mess. But on hearing, it becomes apparent that the seemingly random and dissonant sounds are in fact, an intricate moray of melody and disconnection. What begins as a mess becomes atmospheric; what sounds like randomness becomes organic, and what is at first disconcerting ends as spellbinding. Their half an hour set was enough to lull the crowd into a hypnotic, other-worldly state that was difficult to shake when it came time for the interval.

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After enough time for a drink and a chat, the theatre once again filled up for Decibel. Hailing from Western Australia, Decibel is a five-piece experimental orchestra whose complex creativity and vision make for one intriguing listening experience. The band uses an array of instruments such as the cello, flute and sax, plus a magnetic pitch creator called The Infinity Machine, and works side by side with a computer program to create pieces in which the listener is challenged to find beauty and sense between the conventional notes. The role of the computer is to give each member of the quintet a particular part of a particular song. Thus, no two shows by Decibel will be the same, with the computer giving different instructions each time. From the opening bars of Improbable Games to...
the haunting finish of *Ever Present*, Decibel captivated, mesmerized and challenged, leaving behind some pretty skewed perceptions of how music can be created.

In a testament to the fact that music doesn’t always need lyrics, Pollen Trio and Decibel played sets that were impressive, haunting and not soon to be forgotten by all who were in attendance.

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**Peking Spring Festival: Decibel and Pollen Trio**
May 14th, 2011
THE STREET THEATRE, CANBERRA

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new music to your ears

There's a busy two months ahead for new music lovers. First, Mike Majkowski (Earbash and RT97) and Decibel (RT94, RT97) join forces for concerts in Canberra and Sydney. Decibel will also be performing at PICA in the second of three concerts there with new works by ensemble members Lindsay Vickery and Cat Hope as well as by Chris de Groot, Thomas Meadowcroft and John Cage as well as an arrangement of Scott Walker's Benito's Dream (you can hear some of Decibel's work in our Sound Capsule and keep an eye out for Chris Reid's review of their CD in our next e-dition). The Sunwrae String Quartet is also on tour (and will be reviewed in RT103), with concerts in each capital city, a guest appearance at the Camden Heaven Music Festival in Port Macquarie and a trip to Vietnam. Finally, Canberra is again hosting its adventurous International Music Festival (see our 2010 review). Decibel and Mike Majkowski, Canberra, May 14, www.thestreet.org.au and Sydney, May 15, www.thestreet.org.au and www.cityrecitalhall.com; Decibel, Concert 2, PICA, June 20, www.decibel.waapamusic.com; Sunwrae String Quartet, Eavesdropping Tour, May 5-June 9, www.sunwrae.com; Canberra International Music Festival, May 11-22, www.cimf.org.au

music theatre at home

Chambermade Opera continues its series of intensely intimate operas (The Itch, Another Lament and Target) with Dwelling Structure, subtitled “An Opera in 8 Time Use Episodes.” Citing poet Emily Dickinson, CMO suggests “you will dwell in possibility, a doorless house??,” in what promises to be a highly unusual work created by sound artists Madeleine Flynn and Tim Humphrey with writer Cynthia Troup and “visual assemblage by Neil Thomas, and neighbourly interruptions by The Suitcase Royale.” Chambermade Opera, Dwelling Structure, May 26-28, www.chambermadeopera.com
old new media

From new music to new media…if you missed it in Melbourne last year, you can catch Experimenta: Utopia Now on tour at the Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery. The show features the work of Patrick Bernatchez (Canada), Michael Burton (UK), Cao Fei (China), Christopher Fulham (Australia), Christian Jankowski (Germany), Laurent Mignonneteau & Christa Sommerer (France/Austria), Scenocosme (France), Kit Wise (Australia) and dynamic Melbourne duo, Van Sowerwine & Isobel Knowles, all of whom investigate the double meaning of utopia as the “good place” and/or “no place.” In her RealTime review last year, Saige Walton said the “selected works ranged from joyous and humourous to desolate and unnerving” (RT96). There’s more media art to be seen at the Brisbane’s Gallery of Modern Art. Drawing from its collection, the gallery’s latest exhibition, Physical Video, explores the use of the body in video art, featuring work from the early 1970s through to the present day. Artists include Bruce Nauman (US), Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba (Japan/US/Vietnam, RT46, RT50), Dennis Oppenheim (US), James Oram (New Zealand) and Mike Parr (Australia, RT102) among others. Experimenta: Utopia Now, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, May 12-June 19; www.experimenta.org; Physical Video, GoMA, Brisbane, May 14-Sept 4 2011; www.qag.qld.gov.au

the winner: douglas sirk box set

Our thanks to all the entrants in our competition who informed us how the Madman Douglas Sirk box set would improve their lives. The winner was Melbourne choreographer Phillip Adams, who wrote:

“For those of you who know me, I am strictly a 50s man. From Featherston chairs to Palm Springs chic and my car—a 1959 Merc. The delights and the details in the designs of Sirk’s films in the box set would keep me enthralled hour after hour. The inspiration from the set decorations alone would be like a home magazine filled with retro gems: styles, suits, gloves, backdrops, kitsch all rolled into one. Well, I might even go as far as having Written on Wind playing nonstop as my bedside artwork. Sirk is a man after my own heart.”

The 9-DVD box set of the great films of the 1950s master of aesthetically and socially incisive Hollywood melodramas, Douglas Sirk, was generously provided by Madman Entertainment.
the politics and poetics of human rights

It's 50 years since the United Nations Refugee Convention was established, which makes the Human Rights Arts and Film Festival particularly relevant this year. The festival starts in Melbourne with a program that includes film, visual art, poetry, theatre and public forums. The films will be shown at ACMI in a week-long program of documentaries, animations and shorts. The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre is presenting Not Only My Story, a play in which refugees collaborate with artists such as Yumi Umiumare (RT39, RT71, RT94). There is also artwork by Ash Keating (RT77, RT86, RT91). Smaller versions of the film program will tour Canberra, Alice Springs, Brisbane, Sydney, Byron Bay, Adelaide and Perth. Human Rights Arts and Film Festival, Melbourne May 12-22, national tour May 26-June 12, www.hraff.org.au

head out to head on

Head On Photography Festival is now in its second year. There are over 130 indoor and outdoor exhibitions, events, seminars and workshops across Sydney over seven days. Of particular interest is Robyn Stacey's show Tall Tails and True at Stills Gallery, Paddington, as well as the group exhibition at Roslyn Oxley9 featuring Destiny Deacon (RT66), Bill Henson, Tracey Moffatt (RT102), Julie Rrap, Patricia Piccinini (RT43), TV Moore (RT57), Isaac Julien (RT42, RT92) and Anne Zahalka. There are also two interesting tours on offer: one to a camera obscura in Centennial Park and another of the Powerhouse Museum's basement, which houses a considerable collection of 19th century cameras and photographs. Head On Photo Festival, May 5-June 11, www.headon.com.au

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A HIGHER DECIBEL

Dark images of someone rocking back and forth while they eat their own hair and mumble quietly to themselves can somehow find a way of creeping into your mind when listening to experimental music but Cat Hope from DECIBEL explained there’s more to it than may first meet an unprepared ear.

The mind behind the group from WA said experimental music can be defined as testing boundaries. “For me, experimental music is music that’s adventurous, trying things out… this idea about music that it doesn’t feel like it has to behave in any certain way but comes out freely.” She said Decibel tries to keep performance pieces under 15 minutes to keep things varied.

Their pieces can conjure up a myriad of feelings from darkness to sensuality to peace but Cat says with Decibel’s music, emotional expression is often a coincidence. “Art is, for me, something quite abstract… the abstract beauty of darkness really interests me or I find that those kind of sounds and atmospheres are really beautiful or rewarding or appealing and that’s why I create them in my music.”

With plans in the near future to collaborate with artists from all over the world as well as record and perform regularly, Cat says Decibel will keep on truckin’ despite little funding. “I guess I take the approach to just play concerts, make recordings and take as many opportunities as you can to get your stuff out there.”

Decibel will be testing Canberra’s boundaries soon with four pieces that are sure to engage and entrance audiences. A fascinating feature of the night will be their infinity machine. They had it built just last year by two West Australian sound artists.

“It’s this quite odd machine made of wires that have currents running through them and as the current intensifies, they get softer and little magnets are used to control the sound of these wires as they become increasingly sensitive. A musician or two will play with the infinity machine and the changes in air pressure change the way the machine reacts or the way it sounds.”

Another, more traditional, feature of the show will be guest musician, James Larson, a Canberra based Cellist.

You can catch Decibel with The Pollen Trio at The Street on Saturday May 14 as part of the Peking Spring festival. Tickets are $12 concession, $18 adult, and are available through [www.thestreet.org.au](http://www.thestreet.org.au).