The Aura Implicit: Sam Gillies

Lately, I’ve been thinking about scores, details, descriptions, actions and ideas that do not have words to describe them. To my knowledge, there is not a word that labels this phenomena: otherwise I would have used that as this work title. I suppose that the widely reported idea that Eskimos have an unusually large number of words for snow is a reflection of language attempting to classify the unclassifiable, while simultaneously failing to translate to the English vernacular. (It is a wonderfully poetic idea that the Eskimos familiarity and understanding of snow is so detailed that their language attempts to conquer the infinite variations of snowfall. It is somewhat heartbreakingly to learn that is a fallacy, and that the Eskimo language has about the same number of distinct root words descriptors of snow as English). The phrase ‘the aura implicit’ is a reflection of this intangibility of description and perception. A divisive element of communication that, depending on the strength, determines the extent to which we see, experience and comprehend the idea that has no single communicable word of its own, a blind spot in our communicative codes.

B. The Perils of Obedience: Rachael Dease

This work is inspired by the series of social psychology experiments conducted by Yale University psychologist Stanley Milgram, who set out to measure the willingness of study participants to obey an authority figure instructing them to perform acts that conflicted with their personal conscience. The experiments began in July 1961, three months after the start of the trial of German Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem. Milgram devised his psychological study to answer the question “Was it that Eichmann and his accomplices in the Holocaust had mutual intent, in at least with regard to the goals of the Holocaust?” Three individuals filled three distinct roles: the Experimenter (an authoritative role), the Teacher (a role intended to obey the orders of the Experimenter), and the Learner (the recipient of discipline from the Teacher). The middle section of the work also has clearly defined roles. The teacher is in the form of the performer triggering the samples. “Shock/Voltage” samples from a recording of the original experiment trigger a series of responses from the performers. As the voltage increases, so does the intensity.

Rachael Dease’s artistic practice encompasses the realities of pop culture and art music, theatre and film. Graduating with honours from WAPAPA in composition, Dease is known as frontwoman and songwriter for the critically acclaimed band Scherendies, and as the composer and chanteuse in Matt Luttor’s Antigone. In 2012 Dease won the Music Award and the inaugural top tier Western Power Martin Sims Award at Fringe World for her contemporary song cycle City of Shadows, touring to New York Fringe Festival in August 2012. In September City of Shadows will premiere its first full theatre season at the Malthouse Theatre in Melbourne. Dease is also the composer for award winning TTC production It’s Dark Outside, currently touring the 2013 Sydney, Edinburgh and Pittsburgh Festivals.

www.rachaeldease.com

Decibel:
Cat Hope - Director, flutes, double bass.
Lindsay Vickery - Bass Clarinet, max programming.
Stuart James - Percussion, max programming, network systems.
Triten Parg - Cello
Aaron Wyatt - violin, viola and ipad programming.
Paul Tannen - percussion, piano.

Technical and Support:
Production Assistant: Jostein Myrbøgh.

Thank You:
Tos Mahoney, Annelisa Osenburgh, PICA staff, Matt McLean, K Ford.
http://decibelwapamausic.com

An excerpt of the score for Perils of Obedience

Sam Gillies is a West Australian-based composer and sound artist with an interest in maximal electro-acoustic music. Often treading the line between the musically beautiful and ugly, his most recent output music relies on the use of interactive programming environments to create alternating soundscapes of extreme fragility and overwhelming density. Sam began his undergraduate studies at UWA in 2005, completing a Bachelor of Arts with a focus on literature, theatre and film making, before formally beginning his study of music at WAPAPA, completing a Certificate Level IV of Music Composition in 2008. He started studying a Bachelor of Music (Music Technology) at WAPAPA in 2009 under the tutelage of Lindsay Vickery and Cat Hope. In 2012 he competed an Honours degree in Composition at WAPAPA, achieving first class honours. Sam has performed at both a national and international level, completing a two week tour of Japan in February 2013, and his work has been selected for performance in numerous programs including the 2013 International Computer Music Conference and the 2011 Deep Wireless Festival of Radio Art.

THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN COMPOSERS PROJECT

Tura New Music and PICA present Decibel New Music Ensemble in

THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN COMPOSERS PROJECT

Friday 5th, Saturday 6th July 2013 + 6.30PM
West End Gallery, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts

Welcome to the first 2013 Western Australian concert for Decibel.
We are excited to present a concert of entirely new Western Australian works, commissioned by us especially for this project. 6 of the 8 works are world premiers, 2 are Western Australian premiers. This group of composers ranges from Decibel members, emerging and established composers working in areas as diverse as pop, jazz and electronics.

Over the last two weeks, Decibel has been in residence at PICA, rehearsing and workshopping these works with the composers in the West End Space. This has featured open rehearsals where the public have been able to share part of the preparation for concerts, and artist talks by the composers. It is rare to have the opportunity to work closely with composers in the unfolding of their work, and this process has offered an opportunity for works to be finessed and adapted to elements such as the sound of the room, suggestions from within the ensemble and the adoption of elements unique to the ensemble such as Decibel’s iPad App, the Decibel ScorePlayer.

Decibel is a group of Western Australian composers, improvisors, programmers and sound artists devoted to the realisation of music where acoustic and electronic instruments are represented. Decibel pioneer electronic score formats for new and existing works, incorporating mobile score formats and networked playback environments. Decibel actively support the creation and facilitation of new works for electro acoustic performance, the arrangement of electronic works for live performance, the performance of seminal international works and the representation of Australian and Western Australian artists, established and emerging.

Cat Hope, Artistic Director, Decibel.
There is a particular silence to an art gallery. In a busy city, the art gallery (along with the library, the museum, the church etc.) is one of the last remaining dwellings for silence. This silence is metaphorical of course (literal silence being now well established as impossible). It is the sonic equivalent of the white cube, a neutral atmosphere that brackets off the gallery’s contents from the outside world. The aim of Resident Frequencies is to foreground this silence - to use it as material rather than frame. A recording was made of the ambient sound inside PICA with this recording then played back into the same space and rerecorded a number of times until the resonant frequencies of the room were allowed to reinforce one another. In performance, this process is played in reverse - so that one first hears the room’s resonant frequencies at their most saturated, gradually becoming recognisable as a recording of the space. As this is happening, the acoustic ensemble begin to ‘fill back in’ those frequencies which are gradually becoming inaudible in the tape part. Thanks to Matt Mclean for making these recordings in my absence.

Henry Anderson is a recent composition and music technology graduate from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA). Much of Henry’s current work shows a particular fascination with the various contexts within which people receive sounds. His practice includes music for concert hall settings as well as for gallery spaces, installations and other non-traditional venues. Henry currently resides in Berlin where he studies with renowned Austrian composer and sound artist Peter Ablinger. Henry’s work has been recognised nationally and internationally, most notably in Berlin, Finland (where he recently completed a one-month artist in residence at Aalto University), and Belgium (where he has been selected to participate in the Batârd International Arts Festival in December 2013). Henry will return to Australia at the end of this year. In order to complete a project with Melbourne ensemble Quiver in early 2014.

2. Johannes Leubbes: The past is never far behind

In all we do, our history is present; as nations, as companies and certainly as individuals. We might declare we’ll never be like this or that parent, never repeat that mistake, or we might think ourselves free to choose how we move forward in life, unburdened by previous experience. So be it also as an artist. As a composer I often find myself seeing my history all too vividly in what I write – and finding it ever harder to escape. Experience soon becomes habit, soon becomes repetition… and no matter how good the original, each dilation takes you further away from that which you set out to do: be creative! This work is one individuals attempt to shake that feeling of familiarity, a claim that change is a constant in life, that the past is ever present in the here and now.

Wylie Scholarship for the most outstanding graduate. Throughout his short career he has been the recipient of numerous other awards including the 2009 ‘Youth Arts WA Citizen of the Year’, 2009 ‘Best Australian Jazz Composition of the Year’ (Bell Award), 2009 ‘Jazz Song of the Year’ (WA Music Industry Award) and the 2006 ‘AFPA Professional Development Award’ for Jazz. He has also released two albums with his own award winning ensemble, the Johannes Leubbes Octet (JLO).

An excerpt from the score for Resident Frequencies.

3. Stuart James: N-Dimension

The scientific study of objects and spaces is often described in terms of an n-dimensional topological space, where n is a number representing the dimensionality. Standard Euclidean spaces and objects have whole number dimensions, and fractal dimensions are described as having fractional dimensions. This composition began as an exploration in different musical structures. From fractal and infinite series pitch sets, fractal rhythm, chaotic and fractal controlled spatialisation, and audio feedback, this work "embolizes" on the dimensionality of a small collection of simple musical structures in order to arrive at a more complex and immersive listening experience.

After graduating in jazz piano performance and classical music composition in 2000, Stuart completed a Masters in Creative Arts in 2005 researching correlations between sound and video. As a composer Stuart has had commissions from Tetrafide Percussion, the Australian Broadcasting Commission, and has had his work performed by the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, WA Symphony New Music Ensemble, and Michael Kieran. Harw. Stuart’s compositions have ranged from traditional notated scores through to varied approaches in aleatoric writing and improvisation. Stuart currently also manages The Soundfield Studio, a commercial production, mixing, and mastering facility in Western Australia, and has most recently been involved with mixing and/or mastering for artists including ShockOne, Cycle- 440, Will Stoker and the Embers, and the score for the feature film Sororal. Stuart is a PhD candidate researching real-time approaches to controlling digital spatialisation.

An excerpt from the score for silent revolution.

4. Lindsay Vickery: silent revolution

Silent revolution is a scrolling score fit that reflects on the recent work of journalists Chris Hedges, Jeremy Scahill, Alan Weissman and others. In particular, the opening of the score is a collage of images from Camer, New Jersey, one of the places Chris Hedges refers to as a sacrificial zone, where “where those discarded as human refuse are dumped, along with the physical refuse of post-industrial America”, and “the boneseyard the US airforce’s disposal ground for trillions of dollars worth of decommissioned aircraft. The second part of the score focuses on the displaced: encampments of Occupy, refugees of wars in Mali and Chad and the destroyed face of Lebanon. The final section shows images of a proposed WIPP (Waste Isolation Pilot Plant), described by Alan Weismann as a ‘scarecrow to posternity’ for the storage of waste so toxic that “the U.S. Department of Energy is legally required to dissuade anyone from coming too close for the next 10,000 years”.

The scoring method attempts to solve the issue of notating meter in the scrolling score format, by visualising the metrical hierarchy in a manner similar to that proposed by music academic Henkjan Honing.

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 "screenscreen", 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 (UNSW) and PhD (QUT).

www.lindsayvickery.com

[INTERVAL]

5. Chris Tonkin: Rapid Same Question

Rapid Same Question presents a series of frustrated attempts by the performer to access a text by Gertrude Stein. From time to time, the text is momentarily conjured to the surface, though perhaps in vain, as Stein’s words entirely eschew linear narrative, and so common understanding. Rather, it is the character, quality and intent of the human voice that can convey the character and meaning conveyed and out of this comes a rapid question, out of an eye comes research, out of selection comes painful capture. So the order is that a white way of being round is something suggesting a path and it is of no importance what it is, it is to be analysed and seen a fine substance strangely, so it is easiest to have a green point to not red but to point again” A Box, Gertrude Stein, 1912.

Chris Tonkin is a composer living in Perth, Western Australia. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of California, San Diego. Many of his works have been commissioned and premiered at arts festivals and concerts by ensembles and soloists in Australia, Europe, North America and Asia, such as the Nuova Ensemble Moderne, IRCAM Festival Agora, Fondation Royanmont and the Seoul International Computer Music Festival. In 2004/2005 he spent a year at the Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM) in Paris developing several works for instruments and live electronics, an area that has since been his focus. In January 2008 Chris was appointed Coordinator of Composition and Music Technology at the School of Music, University of Western Australia. Chris’ works have been recorded to CD by the Nuova Ensemble Moderne, Ensemble Offspring and by percussionist Morris Palter. His scores are published and held by the Australian Music Centre.

6. Cat Hope: The Lowest Drawer

The three instruments in this piece trigger sine tones that duplicate the pitch each instrument plays at particular moments in the piece. These tones, from 13 different pick up points, gradually build to a 13 note chord, which will be different each time the piece is played. The tones are evenly spaced - all texture is stripped away and the sine tone continue the trajectory until the end of the piece. The score is proportional, but the player chooses which pitch to play in each iteration, meaning a different cluster will be formed each time. As with many of Cat’s works, the piece descends lower in pitch as it unfolds, ending in the lowest range (drawers) of each instrument. This is a development on an earlier work that used double bass instead of bass drum.

Cat Hope is a composer, sound artist, performer and academic. She is aclassically trained flautist, self taught vocalist and experimental noise bass player with an active profile as a sound artist, soloist, and in music groups. She is the director of the new music ensemble Decibel and has toured internationally as a solo artist. Cat’s practice focuses on low frequency sound, drone, graphic notation and improvisation. Her works have been performed and shown at ISAc, SFNOMA, MFM, the Totally Huge New Music Festival, the WRW Tate New Music in Germany and Liquid Architecture. She is currently a researcher at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts at Edith Cowan University.
DECIBEL STRIKES RIGHT CHORD

New music ensemble Decibel was the ensemble in residence at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts for two weeks in June.

Formed in 2009, the six-member ensemble of WAAPA staff and graduates includes Cat Hope [artistic director, flute and electronics], Lindsay Vickery [reeds, programming and electronics], Stuart James [piano, percussion, programming and electronics], Tristan Parr [cello], Aaron Watton [violin, viola] and Louise Devenish [percussion].

The residency culminated in two performances of new electronic works composed by eight WA composers: Henry Anderson, Rachael Denée, Sam Gillen, Cat Hope, Stuart James, Johannes Luebbers, Chris Tonkin and Lindsay Vickery.

The residency allowed the composers to attend rehearsals and incorporate the distinctive acoustic qualities of the performance space into the music. The result was “a fascinating concert that revealed the breadth of creativity in the local new music scene,” wrote Rossind Appleby in The West Australian.

“The two well-attended concerts demonstrated what many of us already knew: Decibel has become a vital institution in the generation of new music in WA.”

HOPE FOR CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP

Dr Cat Hope, a WAAPA Post Doctoral Research Scholar, has been awarded a prestigious 2013 Churchill Fellowship. This will allow her the opportunity to study the creation and use of music written using graphic scores.

Dr Hope, who is an interdisciplinary composer, musician, sound artist and music researcher, said graphic scores offered an alternative to transcribing and writing music as traditional notation, which was helpful for artists using non-traditional instruments.

“Traditional notation is reliant on a beat, pulse and harmony,” she said. “Graphic scores, which represent music through drawings and colour, can be used by electronic and laptop musicians. It is very broad but the key is that it services a whole range of ideas that you can’t express with traditional music.”

The Churchill Fellowship will enable Dr Hope to travel to Japan, Germany, Iceland, Sweden and the USA as a part of her research into the notation.

Provided by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, the Fellowships allow Australians to travel overseas to experience new opportunities, make contacts with the best in their fields, and bring the experience back to benefit other Australians.

POSTCARDS FROM ABROAD

Soprano Sky Ingram completed a postgraduate degree at WAAPA in 2008, training with Patricia Price. That same year, she won a swag of awards at the Australian Singing Competition’s prestigious Mothie Awards, including the Guildhall School of Music & Drama Award. This took her to London for a year’s postgraduate training at Guildhall with Kathryn Harries and Susan Waters. Since then, she has continued her vocal training at London’s National Opera Studio with Susan Waters, supported by Opera North. Here Sky tells us what’s in her diary for the months ahead.

My training at the National Opera Studio has now finished and I can happily say that it was truly an incredible experience. I learnt a remarkable amount of music and made many inspiring contacts during the year there. The highlights for me included residencies with the Welsh National Opera and Scottish Opera, a song project with Ian Burnsides, and working with Keith Warner and Nicholas Denbury on Contemporary Opera Scenes — where I was lucky enough to work with composer Jonathan Dove, who re-wrote the last two bars of one of his pieces for me to better suit the opera scenes!

I am now preparing to work as a principal soprano at Opera North as Helen in ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’ in the Festival of Britten, and then again in 2014 as the cheeky Musette in Puccini’s ‘La Bohème’.

I am also very proud to have signed with the agency Ingunn & Williams under Thomas Hull. We are filling the diary with some great engagements. The English National Opera has engaged me in a cover contract for 2014 — such a great opportunity!

Well, I’m off to Leeds in a week to settle into the Opera North team. It shall be a very exciting 12 months ahead!

Regards, Sky

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Hitting the right frequency

**CONCERT**

Decibel New Music Ensemble
Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts

**REVIEW**

ROSAULD APLEY

Eight West Australian composers, six musicians, one room, and one mandate: the music must include electronics. The result was a fascinating concert that featured jazz composers. The Wa Academy of Performing Arts graduates and seasoned electronics composers, revealing the breadth of creativity in the local non-music scene.

Decibel was the ensemble in residence at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts for two weeks, which allowed composers to attend rehearsals and incorporate the distinctive reverber of the performance space into the music. Henry Anderson's Resident Frequency 'introduced' the performance space with a composition that responded to a recording of the "sound" of the room. The resonant frequencies were layered to create an electronic hum while the ensemble of flute, bass clarinet, violin, cello and percussion picked out pitches to mimic the recording.

The rhythmic groove in Johannes Luiebists' work 'The Past is Never Far Behind' contrasted with a section of free improvisation. Laubert utilised computer software to create electronic "responses" to the live sounds, resulting in a fairly dense electro-acoustic ensemble sound.

Stuart James' 'N Dimension' was more restrained and the performers used ear pieces to maintain independent tempos. Snippets of instrumental sounds were refracted between the surround-sound speakers creating the effect of chaotic multi-layering.

The political overtones in Lindsay Vickery's Silent Revolution and Rachel Beane's The Perils of Obedience came from images projected on to the wall, footage of social disturbances and psychology experiments literally shaped the scores and musical responses, creating macabre, decaying sound worlds.

In Chris Toskis' Rapid Same Question the crackles and boops of computer sounds dialogued with the instruments with orchestral precision. Cat Hope's The Lowest Drain continued her exploration of the bottom end of the sound spectrum with a ponderous decline in pitch from bass flute, bass clarinet, and bass drum, contrasting with the almost irritating brightness of a sine wave pitch.

Sam Gillies' The Amalgam described a stimulating contrast. Electronic static was joined by lively instrumental sounds which ricocheted between the speakers to create a busy soundscape. The well-attended concert demonstrated what many of us already knew: Decibel has become a vital institution in the generation of new music in WA.
DECIBEL ARE UNDERTAKING A TWO WEEK RESIDENCY AT PICA AS PART OF THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN COMPOSERS PROJECT.

This residency project will conclude with two concerts featuring all Western Australian world music premieres from a diverse range of composers such as Stuart James, Christopher Tomlin, Rachael Dessy, Sam Gillies, Johannes Leubers, Henry Anderson, Cat Hope and Lindsay Vicary. Decibel works with music that combines electronic and acoustic instruments. They also work with new ways of writing and reading music scores, including graphic notation and real-time score generation in many of the works.

The Western Australian Composers Project includes the following:

**Concerts**
- 5 & 6 July, 6.30pm
- 90 minutes with interval
- Standard $20 | Concession/Art Addicts $15
- Tickets 9229 6500 or pica.org.au

**Floor Talks**
- Thursdays 27 June & 4 July, 1.20pm

Join the composers and Decibel Artists Director Cat Hope in the Westend Gallery as they discuss their PICA residency.

For more information and open rehearsal times see pica.org.au