James Rushford is a Melbourne-based composer, pianist, violist and improviser. Studying with artists such as Anthony Pateras, Fred Frith, Brett Dean, Lisa Lim, Markus Schmickler, Reko Fueting, Donna Coleman and Michael Pisaro, James has developed a keen interest in electro-acoustic media and more experimental forms of music making. He has been commissioned by ensembles such as Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Speak Percussion, ELISION (UK), Ear Massage (Netherlands), The Song Company, Ensemble Neon (Norway) and Decibel, and has featured in the Melbourne International Arts Festival (2006 and 2008), Oslo Ultima Festival (2011) and the Melbourne International Jazz Festival (2011). As a performer, he is a founding member of the chamber music ensemble Golden Fur, premiering works by Jaap Blonk (Netherlands), Anthony Fure, premiering works by Jaap Blonk (Netherlands), Anthony

Cat Hope: Juanita Nielsen (2012)

Juanita Nielsen (1937-75) was a wealthy young woman in Sydney who ran a newspaper now which was a vehicle for her views, in particular, against the buying up and demolishing of elegant old terrace houses to redevelop Kings Cross, which involved the harassment of tenants living in the area. She disappeared after a meeting in a club owned by Abe Saffron, a disappearance that has never been solved. Due to corruption in the NSW police at the time, the original investigation was bungled – perhaps deliberately – but a thorough coronial enquiry was not held until 1983, 8 years later. The piece is dedicated to Jon Rose, who lived in NSW for many years, and the string performance techniques are inspired by him. The score reflects my impressions of this story – a young woman’s life moving forwards, ending by being cut up and dispersed, only to be followed by a slow reflection on her past. It is also an homage to him, in the year after his 60th birthday.

Welcome to the third of Decibel’s Perth concerts for 2012. This concert is an important one for us. It celebrates the contributions of composer and performer Jon Rose, who has had an enormous impact on Australian experimental music. I’m sure Jon would appreciate us celebrating his work as a birthday gift to him, in the year after his 60th birthday.

This program features a variety of approaches that honour Jon, from his influence on and direct involvement in the creation of new work, to the curation of a program that emphasizes the freedom his work has allowed us all. Jon Rose is a precious kind of artist. His work is a reflection not only on music, but life itself. His virtuosity – as a performer but also as a generator of ideas, is difficult to surpass. The title of the program is a direct reference to Jon and his obsessive involvement with string instruments. It is also a dedication to past, present and future Australian musical innovators in the world, who continue to refuse to take anything for granted.

We are fortunate to have the opportunity to feature performances by another Australian new music ensemble based in Melbourne, Golden Fur, as well as show works from our composers exchange program. This concert features a new work by Golden Fur member, James Rushford. We continue our series of commissions for Perth songwriters as part of our program, and Lyndon Blue’s telematic link up with the Swan Bells celebrates a coming together of the diversity of music experience in Perth. We also debut our research into tablet computers as score players at this concert. Plenty of reasons to celebrate.

Cat Hope, Artistic Director, Decibel.
Taking crude wordplay as its departure point, Decabell explores the cultural and sonic curiosities of one of humankind’s oldest sound technology pieces. The title juxtaposes ten bells of diverse origin; whether a hand-hewn cowbell from an Indian marketplace, a bicycle bell or a meditative singing bowl, each comes with its unique connotations and a particular, cultural or spiritual purpose. Once struck, each bell’s resonance is captured and electronically prolonged to create an indefinite “ringing out,” before the sustained pitches slowly shift towards ten equidistant frequencies within a four-octave range. The piece’s code comprises various tone clusters from this ten-step scale, ultimately displacing the bell sounds into a system that is clinically egalitarian, yet rooted in its cultural narrative. This piece has been commissioned by Decibel with assistance from the Department of Culture and the Arts Contemporary Music Panel.

Lyndon Blue (WA, b. 1991) is a musician, writer and artist. His musical pursuits to date have referenced classical, traditional, exploratory and popular music forms. Since taking up the violin at a young age, Blue has been fascinated by sound and its diverse capabilities; his projects currently span experimental pop (Steam), myth-inspired soundscaping (Solar Barge), densely texturised electronic (Leafy Suburbal) and more (including folk, hip-pop and noise). His practice is concerned with fusing established styles and questioning high/low art distinctions, while probing traditions and exploring new avenues for music writing. Blue also works in visual and written-word mediums and has recently completed a Bachelor of Arts (English) at the University of Western Australia.


At the centre of Romitelli’s music is a consideration of sound as material into which he forges physical and perceptive characteristics: gran, thick, porous, luminous, density and elasticity. He sees the composition process as a constant drift towards unsustainable densities, distortions and interferences. He is interested in the sonorities of what he calls “prevalently metallic origin” - rock and techno music. This piece aims to emphasize the violent and destructive aspects of projecting reality onto fiction, and is openly inspired by the work of Francis Bacon, particularly the Three Studies for Self-Portrait (1952).

Fausto Romitelli (Italy, 1963-2004) studied composition at the Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi in Milan and subsequently took part in courses at the Accademia Chigiana di Siena with Franco Donatoni. He moved to Paris in 1991, where he became a student of Hughes Dufort and Gérard Grisey. From 1993 to 1995 he was a student of Peter Ablinger (b1959) was born in Austria where he studied graphic arts and free jazz piano. He studied composition with Gösta Neuwirth and Roman Haubenstock-Ramati and since 1982 has lived in Berlin, where he has taught for over eight years at the Kreuzberg Music School. He has been a guest conductor of Klangforum Wien, Uniform Berlin and the Ensemble of the Insels Musik and his music has been featured at festivals around Europe.


'No mate, there’s no school of auctioneering where you can go learn it, I remember as a kid listening to Joe Hawkes selling those studs, he was the Elvis Presley of auctioneering, then Tony Vennor had that same thing with the Bards, he looked like a pony, he faced, gregarious blokes I ever seen, he makes it so easy, you don’t want to be a clone of anybody but you think I like the way that fella sounds, or just one thing he says, then you pick it up, the way of tone in your voice is to create a sense of urgency, build it up to a crescendo, knock it down, this is your last chance, the phrasing is very personal, you can’t pick up a book and say here are all the phrases, a few years back I was doing it to a television, like it was a television hook up and you couldn’t see the public, at the end there was a count down and I suddenly, red faced, gregarious blokes I ever seen, he makes it so easy that became one of my stock phrases if you’ll excuse the pun, smack your hands together, hit your boot and you’re done, it’s logged in the memory, if you listen to a Queensland auctioneering-compared to the west coast, it’s different, there are 100s of blokes auctioneering, you could say it is an aural tradition, look Brian Leslie auctions dairy cattle in the eastern states and he is actually singing, it’s like he has a melody," John Traeger - Auctioneer from The Australia Ad Lib Web Site. Auctioneering is Australia's very own speech-singing; it varies in rhythm, tone, delivery, and vocabulary, from state to state. Jon Rose, whilst realizing that a genuine auctioneer would be able to tell that he was a fraud after hearing only a few seconds, spent time getting his speed up and mimicking the best of them. The film you see and hear here was recorded in Berlin - and a broad Australian accent is hard to locate on Ku’damm. This piece has been commissioned by Decibel with assistance from the Australia Council for the Arts.


Peter Ablinger is one of the few artists today who uses noise without symbolism, or as a signer commonly assigned for chaos, disobedience or destruction. For over twenty years his questioning of the very nature of sound, time, and space in music is evident in his examinations of repetition, monotony, reduction, redundancy, and entropy. The ‘pop’ featured in this work and several of his other works is a reference to the idea of white noise as an ‘every thing in all ways’ type of sound. Whist acknowledging ‘everything’ being all sounds at once, Ablinger asks: how long is ‘all ways?’ He describes this work’s structure as a cross: the sustained note is being the horizontal, and pop as the vertical. The works length, 45 seconds, reflects Ablinger’s ongoing interest in challenging the idea of appropriate duration for music works.


This work acts as contemplation on abandoned places and their former occupants and objects, lost to time and long forgotten. Taking inspiration in particular from Wim Wender’s collection of photographs, Written in the West and the ghost towns of the USA, ‘Dust’ employs the use of fragments of American folk songs and a recording made on a ruined piano to serve as a requiem for things and places past. This piece has been commissioned by Decibel with assistance from the Australia Council for the Arts.

Clare Nina Norelli is a composer, musician and writer based in Perth, Western Australia. As well as writing articles on film music she has also contributed scores to local short films such as Gusto (2006), for which she was nominated for ‘best score’ in the 2006 WA Screen Awards, and the yet-to-be-released, Goodbye Cruel World. As well as writing for ensembles, Clare Nina also performs as a solo artist, and in 2008 released her debut EP, Piano Noir. Clare Nina also writes about film music, contributing to the website, Sound on Sight, and has had her writing featured in the published proceedings of the 2007 Totally Huge Music Festival Conference. This year her paper, Sinister Sonorities: The new sound of horror cinema in the 1970s was presented at the RevCon Academic component of the 2012 Revelation Film Festival.


This piece is based on Jon Rose’s story Das ist Kein Cello (This IS NO cello) from the book he published with Rainer Linz The Pink Violin (1992). It tells the true story of Rose’s attempt to pass through an East German security check point with his custom-made 19-string cello: his visa stated only ‘cello’ and a zealous crew of border guards, one a cellist, questioned him at length, finally insisting that he demonstrate the instrument in a little informal lecture demonstration. Rose is a fabulous fabulist and many of his strangest stories arise from the nail-biting experience of living in East Germany in the 1980s during one of the most absurd periods of human history. This piece celebrates Rose’s Berlin years. You will hear Rose reading parts of the story Das ist Kein Cello. He also contributed agrafified version of the East German national anthem (originally penned by Hans Eisler), which closes the work. The score literally takes the form of the Berlin underground rail system during this period. The players move freely along rail lines overlaid with musical materials for them to realize. Can change lines freely at each “station”. In this work all roads lead to the East, and by the end of the work each of the players has transferred into the East Berlin rail network from which they cannot return. The scores are presented on networked tablet computers, programmed by Aaron Wyatt.

Lindsay Victory is active as a composer and performer across Europe, the USA and Asia. His music includes works for acoustic and electronic instruments in interactive-electronic, improvised or fully notated settings, ranging from solo pieces to opera and has been commissioned by numerous groups for concert, dance and theatre. He was a founding member of Alea New Music Ensemble (1987-1992), Magnetic Pig (1992-2003), GRIT (2001), HEDONIK (2003), and multimedia group SOUMIT (2002-2007). Recent Projects include a tour of Japan with Candid Limbs and presentations of research at the International Computer Music Conference in Huddersfield and the Australasian Computer Music Conference in Brisbane.