

# Cat Hope Decibel

An orange L-shaped graphic element consisting of a horizontal line extending from the left edge of the page and a vertical line extending downwards from the end of the horizontal line, forming a corner shape.

This is an album of compositions by Australian composer Cat Hope, performed by the Decibel new music ensemble. The ensemble has provided a collaborative environment where Hope's composition has evolved, and the group is made up of close colleagues with skills as musicians, composers, producers, sound engineers and software programmers. It is difficult to overstate the importance of this group in Hope's development as a composer. For example, it was within this group that the Decibel ScorePlayer software was developed, software that Hope uses to present her animated graphic notations. Recording engineer and Decibel member Stuart James led the first recordings of Hope's work, and as a performer in the ensemble, Hope was able to become intimately familiar with the repertoire of her favourite composers, including works by composers in the ensemble itself. The ensemble premiered some of her earliest notated works. Sharing a common interest in commissioning and performing Australian new music, the group has toured Australia, Europe, Japan and Malaysia, committing to residency periods where they would develop new works, performance approaches, software and concert programs. Currently, Decibel's six performance members are spread between the Australian cities of Perth and Melbourne.

All the pieces on this album use the Decibel ScorePlayer, a tablet computer application that animates and coordinates the reading of networked graphic scores. In *Chunk*, it sends coordinates the from one page of the score to a Disklavier and the other to the live pianist on a second piano. In *Wanderlust*, different audio recordings can be inserted to the score. In *Shadow of Mill*, the sub tone is played from the score itself, and *Majority of One* includes a notated part for room feedback. Some tracks on this album were recorded in real time over the Internet between Perth and Melbourne, cities some 3400 kilometres from each other, facilitated by software developed by Decibel member Aaron Wyatt.

**Majority of One** is for four sustaining instruments and room feedback. Each instrumentalist chooses a prescribed range, indicated by highest, lowest and mid-point in the score. This must be facilitated by glissandi only – so in the case of Decibel performers, on a single string for the string instruments, and single notes in the winds. The instruments are augmented by 'room feedback' that engages the harmonic qualities of each venue the piece is played in. The title is taken from a discussion between David Charlton, Jolyon Laycock and

Morton Feldman in 1966, the year of Hope's birth: *C: Do you think that indeterminate music, your music, is for yourself or for everybody?*  
*MF: I think it is for everybody; I think that all art has its special audience. You have the certain types of faces that you see at a Renaissance concert, at a Wagner concert. It has its audience as well as any other music has its audience. All audiences are departmentalised; so I think it is a kind of fantasy to think of a „serial“ audience. I met someone who could only listen to Mendelssohn: he was an audience of one. L: As long as you have an audience, no matter how large or small it is, your music has a reason.*  
*MF: Well, one is a majority of one!*  
<https://www.cnvill.net/mfopus2.htm>

**Juanita Nielsen** features amplified strings that apply distortion effects at certain points of the score. After the score is performed once through, the ScorePlayer jumps to different places in the score, changing direction randomly, before playing backwards, from end to start, making the work different in each performance. Juanita Nielsen (1937–75) was a young Sydney woman who ran a community newspaper entitled „Now“. In the paper, she highlighted the buying and demolishing of elegant historic terrace houses in her area, and the related harassment of tenants to make way for new housing developments. Her mysterious disappearance has never been solved. The work takes impetus from this story, the chaos, random sequences, unforeseeable consequences. The piece is dedicated to composer and violinist Jon Rose who inspired the string performance techniques. The work was premiered by Decibel at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts in September 2012.

**Chunk** features synchronised graphic scores for each piano – the Disklavier part reads it's score image as MIDI messages, and the live pianist reads their part at the same pace. This work is an experiment with the concept of 'black MIDI', where the aim was to have the Disklavier play all notes at once at full volume, and set this alongside what a human pianist is capable of. Being interested in noise music, I was fascinated with the possibility of the these massive 'chunks' of sound. The aim was of course unrealisable – the hammer action of the piano needs to recover before it can strike again – but the variety of messages sent to the Disklavier try to achieve as close as possible to a 'noise piano'. The initial score technology was developed by Jarryd Bird and Stuart James. The work was dedicated to Mark Gasser, who performed its premiere in 2011.

**Wanderlust** is a work for any one or two instruments and a field recording of walking. The piece is assembled by the performer: they undertake a recording of themselves walking to the venue of performance. This is put into the Decibel ScorePlayer with Hope's score image – the length of the walk thus dictates the duration of the score. This work is named after a book of the same name by American author Rebecca Solnit, published in 2000. The book is a requiem to walking, where the erasure of the journey is seen as the result of the „anxiety to produce“ that characterizes contemporary life. This piece takes as long as the walk does, in an attempt to realign our experience of concert time with that of walking. The version of *Wanderlust* on this album is for percussion and electronics, and the field recording is of walking the dog around the block during the lengthy Melbourne COVID 19 pandemic lockdown. The work was commissioned as a solo by recorder player Sylvia Hinz in 2017, and a duo version was developed in 2019 in collaboration with the ensemble Clocked Out.

**Shadow of Mill** is a three-movement reflection on the devastating

**Cat Hope** is an Australian based composer, performer and academic. She is a classically trained flautist, pop vocalist and improvising noise bassist. Her 2017 *Hat[Art]Hut* monograph CD 'Ephemeral Rivers' won the German Record Critics prize that year, when Gramophone magazine called her „one of Australia's most exciting and individual creative voices.“ She is a Civitella Ranieri and Churchill Fellow whose work has been discussed in books such as *Hidden Alliances* (Schimana, 2019), *Sonic Writing* (Magnusson, 2019), *Loading the Silence* (Kouvaris, 2013), *Women of Note* (Appleby, 2012), *Sounding Postmodernism* (Bennett, 2011) and a range of other periodicals. Her music has been played by the BBC Scottish Orchestra, ELISION and range of ensembles worldwide. She is supported by her role as Professor of Music at Monash University in Melbourne.

**Decibel** are a new music ensemble that focus on the integration of acoustic and electronic instruments in chamber music performance, founded by Hope in Western Australia in 2009. They are world leading interpreters of animated graphic notations and pioneer digital score formats for composition

'White Australia' policy enacted by the Australia government in 1901. The title is taken from Phil Griffith's 2002 paper "Towards White Australia: The Shadow of Mill and the Spectre of Slavery in the 1802 Debates on Chinese Immigration" and uses a copy of this policy, printed on paper of today, on the cello: sensuously rubbed and grated against the body and strings of the instrument. The cello is a example of European Culture imported into Australia, and not played as originally intended. The piece demands the instrument be radically detuned, struck and rubbed with the paper, the cello sound underpinned by subtle, undertones. The work aims to highlight the disconnect between European musical instruments from the unique Australian environment. The work proceeds slowly in the bottom registers of the cello, engaging double bow techniques and small theatrical gestures. The work is dedicated to and written for Decibel cellist Tristen Parr, who premiered it in 2018.

and performance. This includes the ongoing development of the Decibel ScorePlayer, an iPad application for the coordinated reading of graphic notation, now used by music ensembles and in music institutions internationally. Whilst rooted in the western art music tradition, Decibel aim to remove stylistic boundaries in their commissioning and performance approaches.

The ensemble has collaborated with composers such as Eliane Radigue, Werner Dafeldecker, Agostino Di Scipio, Alvin Curran, David Toop, Marina Rosenfeld, Lionel Marchetti and Johannes S. Siermanns, and worked with iconic Australian composers Jon Rose, Andree Greenwell, Alan Lamb, Ross Bolleter, Warren Burt, Ros Bandt, Erik Griswold and Anthony Pateras. They have commissioned over 80 new works since their inception in 2009, over 50 of these from Western Australian composers.

*Cat Hope* is a composer, performer, songwriter, noise artist and researcher. She is lautist, experimental bassist and artistic director of Decibel new music ensemble, which led to her being awarded the Australian APRA|AMC Award for Excellence in Experimental Music. *Decibel* are a new music ensemble that focus on the integration of acoustic and electronic instruments in chamber music performance, founded in Western Australia in 2009. They are world leading interpreters of graphic notations and pioneer digital score formats for composition and performance. The ongoing development of the Decibel ScorePlayer, an iPad application for the coordinated reading of graphic notation, has seen them create software now used by music ensembles and in music institutions internationally. Whilst rooted in the western art music tradition, Decibel aim to remove stylistic boundaries in their commissioning and performance approaches.

June 2021

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**Cat Hope** flutes, double bass, composition,  
artistic director

**Lindsay Vickery** reeds, composition,  
programming

**Aaron Wyatt** viola, iOS programming

**Tristen Parr** cello, production

**Stuart James** piano, composition,  
programming, sound design

**Louise Devenish** percussion

1 **Majority of One** (2016) 9:45  
bass flute, bass clarinet, viola,  
cello and room feedback.

2 **Juanita Neilson** (2012) 10:58  
2 amplified violas, 2 amplified cellos, piano and  
electric guitar.  
(featuring special guest Ant Gray, electric guitar)

3 **Chunk** (2011) 10:17  
Piano and Disklavier

4 **Wanderlust** (2017/2020) 5:11  
[Elsternwick, Victoria: October 2020]  
Percussion, electronics and field recording of  
walking the dog around the block during the hard  
lockdown in Melbourne during the COVID pandemic.

5 **Shadow of Mill** (2017–2018) 13:23  
cello and subtone

ISRC 132.2022534 to 132.2022538

Total Time DDD <sup>24</sup>Bit

49:36

All compositions by Cat Hope, Tuhtah Publishing SUI SA.

Recording dates of the tracks: 1 & 4 March 2021,  
Track 5 April 2021, Track 2 October 2016, Track 3  
April 2018; Recorded and Mixed at Soundfield  
Studio by Stuart James, except Chunk, which was  
recorded at the Western Australian Academy of  
Performing Arts. Wanderlust Melbourne recordings  
undertaken by Hadyn Buxton at the Digital Hub,  
Monash University, Melbourne. CD-master by  
Michael Brändli, Hardstudios AG.; Liner notes by Cat  
Hope; graphic concept by fuhrer vienna; Associate  
producer: Christian C. Dalucas; Executive producer:  
Werner X. Uehlinger

Honoring producer: Bernhard „Benne“ Vischer.

This recoding was made possible with assistance  
from the Australia Council for the Arts, the Australian  
Federal government art funding body and with kind  
support from the Willy A. und Hedwig Bachofen-  
Henn Stiftung Basel.

[www.cathope.com](http://www.cathope.com) · [www.decibelnewmusic.com](http://www.decibelnewmusic.com)

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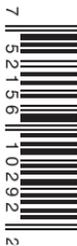
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