

work for the sound and focus of Decibel. Over the last decade or so the composers in Decibel all explored approaches to evoke Ligeti-like textures for the ensemble using electronic enhancements, and so in after atmospheres some of these Decibel techniques find their way back to their source. After atmospheres is not quite an arrangement, and also not a new work, but hopefully an evocation of, and homage to, Ligeti's inspirational ground-breaking original in the centenary of his birth.

**Lindsay Vickery** is a prolific composer - his over 200 works explore new forms of score presentation and musical structure; the nexus of electronic and acoustic music; and composed, improvised and interactive approaches. His music has been performed throughout Australia, the USA (13 states), Europe (14 countries) and Asia Pacific (6 countries). His work together with Decibel colleagues on methods of coordinating live performers and electronics, including his role in the development of the ground-breaking Decibel ScorePlayer for iPad, has been at the leading edge of international developments for the past decade.

This project has been developed as part of The Digital Score project (DigiScore) funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (Grant agreement No. ERC-2020-COG – 101002086).

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Special thanks to:  
Tura, Roly Skender, Steve Berrick, Antionette Carrier  
The Rechabite.



## Credits

Artistic Director/Concept – Cat Hope  
Media artist – Sohan Ariel Hayes  
Producer - Tristen Parr  
Production Design - Mark Haslam  
Sound Engineer – Guy Smith  
Lighting / Set Installation– Peter Young  
Social Media - Rachel Davison  
Artwork – Triainos Pithiofakis  
At the Rechabite - Production and Technical Manager - Mark McEwan; Audio - Gus McKenzie, Lighting/AV - Quin Purcher.

**Decibel** are world-leading interpreters of graphic notations and pioneer digital score formats for composition and performance. This includes the ongoing development of their successful Decibel ScorePlayer App for iPad, enabling coordinated performance of graphic notations. Whilst rooted in western art music tradition, Decibel aim to remove stylistic boundaries in their commissioning and performance approaches, which focus on the combination of acoustic and electronic sounds. They won the APRA AMC Award for experimental music twice – in 2011 and 2014, have 9 albums to their name, and have toured to Europe, UK, Japan, Malaysia and around Australia on several occasions. Their most recent album, 'After Julia' on Australian label Tall Poppies, was called "utterly masterful" (*Loudmouth, the Music Trust, 2023*), and their collaboration with French artist Lionel Marchetti 'The Last Days of Reality' a masterpiece' by Italian Magazine *Tone Shift* (2019). They have an upcoming album and book 'The Complete John Cage Variations'on Mode USA in 2024.

Tristen Parr (cello)  
Louise Devenish (percussion, piano harp)  
Cat Hope (flutes)  
Lindsay Vickery (clarinets)  
Stuart James (electronics, piano harp)  
Aaron Wyatt (viola) [subbed this evening by Christian Read]

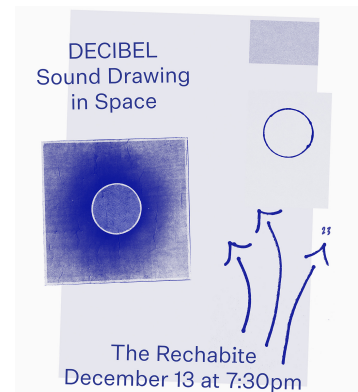
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**DecibelNew Music Ensemble** The Rechabite and the European Research Council's "Digi-Score" project present

# SOUND DRAWING IN SPACE

**Wednesday 13 December 2023, 7.30pm**  
**The Rechabite Hall**



**1. as though my ears are your ears – Kezia Yap (VIC) (world premiere)**

**2. Shadow Aria – Jaslyn Robertson (VIC) 2022 (WA premiere)**

**3. Bardju – Brenda Gifford (NSW) (world premiere)**

**4. Sum (some) of the Parts - Donna Hewitt (NSW) (world premiere)**

**5. bad snake laugh – David Brown (VIC) 2005/2023 (world premiere)**

**6. The Forecast – Kate Milligan (WA) (world premiere)**

**7. after atmospheres – Lindsay Vickery/ György Ligeti (WA/Hungary) (world premiere)**

Decibel began with a clear objective – to perform music where acoustic and electronic sound combine in chamber music settings. This led us to perform music where alternate and experimental music notations were common, and we become engaged with methods to manage and coordinate these unusual, picture orientated scores. In response, we developed the 'Decibel ScorePlayer' for the iPad, an app that coordinates predominately graphic scores, now used by composers and ensembles worldwide.

It turns out that tinkering with the possibilities of notation leaks out into every aspect of the performance – where we do it, how we set the audience and performers in the space, and how to break away from the two dimensional 'paper shape' used by composers and musicians for centuries. In this program, we take the score away from the concept of a 'page' and into three dimensional space. We vary the spatial diffusion of sound to reinforce that concept. In collaboration with the composers, media artist Sohan Ariel Hayes and producer Tristen Parr, the scores are designed to be read by audience and musicians alike, engaging directly with the performance site, and the common listening space.

This is perhaps our most experimental concert presentation yet. It has 6 world premieres from across Australia, something we are immensely proud of. We hope you enjoy it!

Cat Hope, December 2023.

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### 1. as though my ears are your ears – Kezia Yap

Writing for an unknown space, as though my ears are your ears is an attempt at long-distance familiarisation. Thinking through the lens of the room itself simultaneously constituting and realising a score, the performers get to know the space through touch and sound, inviting the audience on their journey through close listening. The performers are guided on their explorations by a light score, 'designed' in real time by other members of the ensemble, directing them how to play the walls, floors and corners.

Working across mediums and disciplines, **Kezia Yap's** practice contemplates the expanded musical score as a vehicle through which to invite critical listening, and engage with various extramusical ideas. Kezia uses space and silence as tools to explore themes including natural and built environments, spatio-temporal relationships, and cultural and linguistic identities. She is a graduate of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music (University of Sydney), and most recently completed a Master of Fine Arts in Research (Visual Arts) at the Victorian College of the Arts (University of Melbourne). Kezia is also a producer for The Music Show on ABC Radio National.

### 2. Shadow Aria – Jaslyn Robertson

Shadow Aria is a piece about silenced voices, and an experiment with lighting and multichannel audio as digital scores. A few years ago, I interviewed Helen Gifford, one of the most interesting Australian composers of the last century. She told me about orchestral pieces and operas she had written over the years that were never performed because of gendered discrimination and the restrictions of her illness. Since then, I have wondered how many pieces have been lost, or never written, due to the lack of opportunities given to marginalised people. In this piece, we hear the accompaniment to a silent soloist.

**Jaslyn Robertson** is a queer, multidisciplinary composer and researcher. Driven by collaboration and experimentation, she works with video, spatialised audio and new forms of notation to realise her creative concepts. Working closely with improvising performers, artists, writers and fashion designers expands her perspective. The aim of her work is to form multisensory performances that raise questions and unfold into discussion on complex social issues.

### 3. Bardju – Brenda Gifford

Bardju is about a journey from a woman's camp to the community camp, and the experiences along the road, such as the water hole they visit, animals and landmarks they see along the way. A journey that encompasses the old and the new, at the core of this piece is culture. The field recording featured in this performance is by Stuart James, and was made on Whadjuk Noongar country.

**Brenda Gifford** is a Yuin, First Nations Contemporary Classical Composer. Her culture is the basis of her music. She is working on a piece for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and has been commissioned by Four Winds Festival and others. Her music is available through ABC Classic Music. The Album Women of Note (Bardju). She has twenty years extensive experience as a musician and is a composer, saxophonist, pianist and teacher. Brenda was a member of the Band Mixed Relations with Bart Willoughby from No Fixed Address. She toured extensively nationally to Aboriginal communities around Australia and Internationally to Native American communities and the Pacific Islands. She has worked with Kev Carmody, on his album Eulogy (for a black person) playing saxophone on the track Blood Red Rose, album/CD-/Festival/D-30692. She wrote the album sleeve notes for the reissued The Loner Album by Uncle Vic Simms. She has done over one hundred interviews and oral histories.

### 4. Sum (some) of the Parts - Donna Hewitt

Facial expressions are a silent universal language that conveys a wealth of information and emotion. They hold a profound significance within the realm of music, theatre and visual media as a powerful tool for artists and semiotic for audiences. The nuanced interplay of emotions and the technical challenges faced by musicians during their performance are intricately interwoven into the delicate fabric of these expressions. Similarly, musicians glean vital cues from the conductor or choir master's expressions reading the unspoken instructions etched upon their faces, which serve as an interpretive lens for their musical performance. Sum of the Parts utilises facial expressions as the artefact of a musical score for the performers. The composition draws its inspiration from the language of the human face to communicate intricate and specific musical messages.

Videoographer – John Montgomery

**Donna Hewitt** is a composer, performer, instrument designer and academic. Her creative practice explores mediated performance environments and new ways of interfacing the human body and voice with electronic media. She is currently working on the development of an electronic Opera about AI with all female identifying Australian choir, The House, with the support of the Australia Council for the Arts and a recent Bundanon Arts residency. In Feb 2023 she undertook a residency at ARUP Sydney's 16 channel immersive studio which was supported by CreateNSW. She is currently an Associate Professor in Music at the University of New England.

### 5. bad snake laugh – David Brown

The graphic score 'bad snake laugh' is a pictorial, lteral and phonetic transcription drawn from a studio based, recorded composition of the same name, on the "candlesnuffer" CD release 'apsomeophone' in 2005. The pictorial score was more recently arrived at through two iterations. The first a rough version drawn using red ballpoint pen, and then a more considered, colourful drawing showing individual parts, executed on Arches watercolour paper using various coloured ballpoints. The first rough version was drawn during repeated listenings to small segments of the recorded version, in an attempt to capture all the compositional elements graphically. Upon completion of the final coloured score a legend was drawn up where colours correspond to and denote instrumentation. The legend, loose instructions and rough time indicators, along with the original audio recording provide a guide and reference points but interpretation by the performing ensemble is open.

**David Brown** has been involved in the Melbourne avant-garde, art rock/punk rock scene since the mid-seventies. The focus of his solo project "candlesnuffer" has increasingly centred on the development of composing techniques which meld opposing streams like conventional electroacoustic methods with noise and rock and also the development of a vocabulary of tiny acoustic sounds enlarged outside their normal context. He has continued to develop a vocabulary that runs the gamut from rock bassist through experimental guitarist to sound artist and has recently completed a PhD project researching the use of electroacoustic compositions in a public hospital Emergency Department.

### 6. The Forecast – Kate Milligan

The Forecast is a performance-installation wherein water is a co-creator. Fragments of text circulate in a custom wishing well, and instrumental whispers mingle with the shards of light reflected by the water's surface. The text is sourced from weather reports in old editions of The West Australian—published exactly one hundred years ago to the date of the premiere of this new work. Combined with the visual metaphor of a wishing well, these archival texts encourage us to think about humanity's historical entanglement with natural systems, and the methods we use—magical or scientific—to reconcile with these greater forces. At the core of The Forecast is the balance of human (text) and non-human (generative, watery) notation. Performers respond to both with semi-structured improvisation. Ultimately, this work is about how environmental prediction becomes compulsion in the face of the climate crisis, and about the futility of our human-scale instruments against unruly natural systems. As the proverb goes: be careful what you wish for.

**Kate Milligan** is a Western Australian composer, designer, and musicologist currently based in the United Kingdom. She works with exploratory music notation, and interrogates audio-visual correlation through graphic, animated, and sculptural media. She has been commissioned by electro-acoustic ensembles across Australia and the UK. Recent work includes a performance-installation for the London Symphony Orchestra Soundhub, and a spin-system instrument presented at the IRCAM Forum for spatial sound. Kate is a graduate of the Royal College of Art, London, and The University of Western Australia. Her writing on new music and art is published in both popular and academic contexts.

### 7. after atmospheres – Lindsay Vickery/ Gyorgy Ligeti

Strangely, after Cat Hope asked if I would be interested in making a Decibel arrangement of György Ligeti's atmospheres (1961), I remembered that I had actually dreamt of rehearsing an arrangement of the piece a few years earlier. Of course it is exactly the kind of crazy idea that would occur to you in a dream: arranging a work for an orchestra of over ninety independent parts for just six performers. But this is a special work to many composers - one of the seminal examples of Sound Mass, the musical approach that foregrounded texture and timbre over melody and harmony. atmospheres is something of a foundational