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Scale Variable
New Chamber Music
Concert 1/4

Intermodulations
Decibel

7 June 2016
Studio Underground
State Theatre Centre

Roger Smalley

Composer and concert pianist Roger Smalley (1943–2015) spent the majority of his adult life in Perth, Western Australia where he taught composition at the University of Western Australia from 1976 until 2007 when he moved to Sydney on his retirement. Before this time, however, he was part of an important electro-acoustic group entitled Intermodulation. This was a composer-performer ensemble inspired by the likes of AMM, Soft Machine, The Who and Cream, Terry Riley's *In C*, performances by Cage, Cunningham and Cardew as well as the earliest performances of Stockhausen's ensemble. Smalley's involvement with electronic music forms the basis of the concert's curatorial direction, prepared in consultation with the original performances and materials from Smalley's archive.

Smalley's legacy to Australian music is enormous. Coming direct from the burgeoning European scene, he made significant contributions to WA musical life through his composing, performing, programming and conducting.

Smalley was a tutor and mentor to many Western Australians including several of tonight's composer/performers – Cat Hope, Lindsay Vickery, Stuart James and Chris Tonkin as well a major inspiration in the creation of Tura (nee Evos).

Roger Smalley passed away in August 2015. This concert is in his memory.

Decibel

Decibel is not unlike Intermodulation in its make up and intent. Our homage to Smalley is a selection of works that relate most closely to Decibel. Thus the program is dedicated to compositions for acoustic and electronic instruments, mostly written before he arrived in Australia.

Decibel is a world leader in the integration of acoustic instruments and electronics, the interpretation of graphic notations and pioneer digital score formats for composition and performance.

The ensemble has collaborated with composers such as Eliane Radique, Werner Dafeldecker, Agostino Di Scipio, Alvin Curran, David Toop, Marina Rosenfield, Lionel Marchetti and Johannes S. Siermans and worked with iconic Australian composers Jon Rose, Alan Lamb, Ross Bolleter, Warren Burt, Eric Griswold and Anthony Pateras. Decibel has also toured and recorded monograph concerts dedicated to Alvin Lucier, John Cage and Giacinto Scelsi.

Decibel has commissioned over 60 new works since their foundation in 2008, has toured Europe and Australia, recorded for ABC Classic FM and SWR German radio, and released five albums to date on Australian and international labels. The ensemble has developed and commercialized the Decibel ScorePlayer iPad app, a score reading device for graphic notations that was recently selected for showcase at the International Classical:NEXT meeting in Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

The Decibel Difficult Commission Project

Support Decibel's commissioning of three new Western Australian works in 2016, that will be featured in Decibel's 2016–2017 concert programs. decibelnewmusic.com

Tura welcomes you to the 2016 Scale Variable Series, presented in association with the Perth Theatre Trust. These four concerts represent an enthralling spectrum of new chamber music practice in WA and from around the world. We are delighted to launch the series with WA's renowned Decibel Ensemble, celebrating the life and work of national legend Roger Smalley.

Intermodulations

A concert of the works for electronics and acoustic instruments by Roger Smalley

Performed by Decibel

1. **Didjeridu** (1974) for four channel tape
2. **Transformation** (1968 rev71) piano and live electronic modulation
AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE
Piano: Adam Pinto, Electronics: Chris Tonkin
3. **Impulses** (1986) sextet
Flute: Cat Hope, Cello: Tristen Parr, Piano: Adam Pinto, Dx7: Stuart James, Percussion: Louise Devenish, Trombone: Bruce Thompson, Conductor: Aaron Wyatt
4. **Monody** (1971–2) for piano with live electronics.
Piano: Stuart James, Electronics: Lindsay Vickery

INTERVAL

5. **Zeitebenen** (1973, revised 1975)
AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE
Soprano Saxophone: Lindsay Vickery, Viola: Aaron Wyatt
Percussion: Louise Devenish, Piano: Stuart James
Electronics: Chris Tonkin, Tapes: Cat Hope, Tristen Parr
Conductor: Pedro Alvarez

Tonight's performance is being recorded by ABC Classic FM for future broadcast.

Decibel Ensemble Artists

Cat Hope: Artistic Director, composer, flutes, basses
Lindsay Vickery: composer, reeds, programming
Stuart James: composer, keyboards, programming, sound diffusion
Tristen Parr: cello
Aaron Wyatt: viola, programming
Louise Devenish: percussion
Guests: Chris Tonkin, Pedro Alvarez, Adam Pinto, Bruce Thompson, Tim Gillett.

Program Notes

Didjeridu (1974) for four channel tape

Didjeridu was composed in February–April 1974, whilst Smalley was Composer-in-Residence at The University of Western Australia, during his first visit to Australia. The tape was made in conjunction with John Exton, the designer of the Electronic Music Studio at the University, during a very hot summer in Peth. It is Smalley's only tape work, and uses source materials extracted from an LP that is still housed in the UWA library, featuring traditional music from the Mornington Peninsula. Before coming to Australia, Smalley had never heard any didgeridoo playing. He was struck by its extraordinary rhythmic complexity and similarity to electronic techniques. The piece does not use tape splicing at any stage in its creation – all the individual layers were made in real-time, and the final mix was performed with the aid of assistants and a written score.

Transformation (1968 rev71) piano and live electronic modulation

Transformation was commissioned by the City Music Society and completed in the UK in March 1969. It was Smalley's first work to use live ring-modulation, an electronic process that multiplies the audio signal from the acoustic piano against a sine tone to output the sum and difference tones between their waveforms. Sounds are picked up during the performance by microphones above the piano strings, and transformed simultaneously by a ring modulator and filter. They are then amplified through two loudspeakers, creating a delicate mix of live and transformed sounds. The electronic apparatus is operated by a second performer whose part is precisely notated in the score.

Impulses (1986) sextet for flute, alto trombone, percussion, piano, Yamaha DX7 synthesizer, cello.

This work was realized during Smalley's tenure as a lecturer at the University of Western Australia. It was premiered by Flederman, an important new music ensemble in Australia at that time. This piece treats ideas from another piece, Pulses (1969) for 15 brass instruments, 5 drummers and live electronics and features Smalley's distinctive attention to rhythmic detail and subdivision, featuring a series of overlapping rhythmic sections in differing tempi with improvised transitions between them. The piece features the Dx7 synthesizer, a popular new electronic instrument at the time.

Monody (1971-2) for piano with live electronics.

Monody is the first of Smalley's pieces to feature ring-modulation as structural, rather than colouristic and decorative role. This is achieved by restricting the piano part to a single monodic line throughout. The pianist controls the frequency of the sine-wave generator by means of a small keyboard played with the left hand. The resulting frequencies do not necessary conform to equal temperament and sound “noisy” to varying degrees. In addition, two drums and four triangles are also ring-modulated producing noisier and brighter colors to contrasting blocks of musical material. Like 'Zeitebenen', the work draws its pitch materials, rhythms and structural proportions from the Fibonacci sequence.



Roger Smalley, Photo: John Austin



Excerpt from score of *Zeitebenen*

Zeitebenen (1973–75) (Australian Premiere) for live electronic ensemble and tape

Zeitebenen (time-levels) is a large-scale work lasting 45 minutes. It was written for and premiered by Smalley's group 'Intermodulation' in Germany in 1973. Commissioned by the West German Radio (WDR), the tape part was realised with the technical assistance of Peter Eotvos and Luz-Estella Santos, in Germany. The tape and instrumental parts were conceived and composed simultaneously, with much of the material being developed in hotels and on airplanes during the recording and European tour of Stockhausen's 'Momente' (1962–69), in which Smalley played the Hammond organ. Smalley saw it as his first attempt to express more political ideas through his music, in particular the problem of the composer's responsibility to society at large. It shares musical themes with the piano and electronics work *Monody*. The tape parts are made of all 'natural' (not synthesized) sounds, and feature a recording of his then 3 year old son David singing as well as the cries of animals, storms and sounds of warfare that are notated precisely in the score. It is an exciting, invigorating work that brings together a range of Smalley's inspirations and demonstrates the wide-ranging nature of his imagination.

The works have been prepared with generous assistance from Roger Smalley's family, friends, collaborators and collecting institutions including The National Library of Australia and the Australian Music Centre. Special thanks to Cathie Travers, Pattie Benjamin, Robyn Holmes, Simon Emmerson, Peter Britton, Reinhold Friedl and Tim Brook. Decibel and Tura also thank WAAPA and ECU for the support of this program.

Roger Smalley and Intermodulation

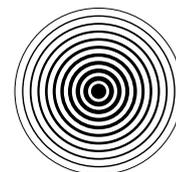
Smalley called the ensemble a “four-person live electronic improvisation type ensemble” and almost every Intermodulation concert featured at least one piece by a composer in the ensemble. All members were adept with electronics, using VCS3 synthesizers, effects pedals and other instruments to change their instrumental sounds as well as create new ones. After a premiere performance in 1970, the group performed three BBC Promenade Concerts and a European tour that included a performance at WDR's “7 Tage Elektronische Musik” in June 1972 along with the Stockhausen Group, Terry Riley and La Monte Young. The group performed their last concert in 1976, just before Roger moved to Australia, and Smalley didn't continue with electronic music for long after that, apart from a few small-scale pieces for instrument and electronics. Smalley didn't feel this music had a relevance in Australia, stating in an interview with author/composer/broadcaster Andrew Ford: “I had to undergo a fairly severe period of thinking, ‘What am I going to do next?’ If I was going to write something which was going to mean anything to the Australian public, I obviously couldn't do this sort of music.” Times have changed.



Intermodulation



Intermodulation Poster



Tura New Music

Driving the evolution of music and the sonic arts.

Tura New Music is proudly approaching its 30th year as an internationally recognised organisation for the production and advocacy of groundbreaking programs, works and partnerships in music and the sonic arts.

Through its award-winning programs, Tura engages with tens of thousands of people across Australia every year, enriching lives through music and sonic art experiences. Linking artists with new audiences, connecting rural and urban culture, and creating experiences which transcend mainstream performance.

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Scale Variable New Chamber Music
 Concert 2/4

Scattered Experiments
 Louise Devenish & James Hullick

27 August 2016
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Scale Variable New Chamber Music
 Concert 3/4

The Calm Before
 Soundstorm

2 November 2016
 Studio Underground
 State Theatre Centre

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Scale Variable New Chamber Music
 Concert 4/4

Darkened Descent
 Intercurrent

14 December 2016
 Studio Underground
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Scale Variable 2016 is presented in association with the Perth Theatre Trust and is part of the City of Perth Winter Arts Festival.