

# feedback

## DECIBEL

*Callaway Auditorium, Crawley*

19/11/09

For a classical ensemble, **Decibel** are pretty rock'n'roll. Of course their artistic director Cat Hope frequented the Perth rock scene for ages, electronics man Malcolm Riddoch plays in noise outfit Abe Sada, and cellist Tristan Parr is part of Schvendes and Fall Electric, so it makes sense that, although they perform contemporary avant-garde classical works, there's also a streak of anarchic energy about them too. The *Somacoustica* recital was a fitting display of this multi-modality, both beginning and ending with pieces by artists that, despite or regardless of their experimental nature, also operate within the popular. Laurie Anderson's *Duet For Violin And Doorjamb* began the evening on a suitably conceptual, note. The overall concept behind *Somacoustica* was the exploration of sound within space, and by amplifying a doorway and having a violinist stand within it so that his bow hit its sides, this concept was given both an engaging and

humorous introduction. Lindsay Vickery's *Antibody* saw the whole ensemble processed and reassembled through live electronics, whilst Vickery himself performed Rainer Linz' *Walk On Parts*, playing four different reed instruments and again through electronic intervention, soloing with himself. Ros Bandt's *Four + Five* added melody and musical structure in the form of short pulsing parts that overlapped each other in a gorgeous invocation of rhythm, whilst Hope's *Abe Sada: Sada Abe 1936* ended the first half in a visceral climax whereby the ensemble played beneath the raked seating, with bass tones offering the most physical invocation of *Somacoustica*'s concept. The second half began with Alvin Lucier's *Still And Moving Lines Of Silence In Families Of Hyperbolas*, whereby sine tones were bent and warped through the introduction of violin and flute. Incredibly minimal in nature, both ably exemplified the physical phenomena that occur through sound. These were interspersed around Pauline Oliveros' *Antiphonal Meditation*, whereby two groups improvised in tandem, whilst John Cage's *Cartridge Music* saw Hope and Riddoch invoke an almighty ruckus through turntable stylus' placed in contact with all manner of sonic ephemera, including their own bodies. Finally, the Velvet Underground's *The Gift*, whereby a single stereo image of John Cale's infamous monologue was underscored by a gorgeous rendition of the original, truly brought the night and the concept together. It was a fitting close to a recital that, though steeped in the form and ritual of classical music, certainly displayed its share of edge and attitude.

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