

Professor Cat Hope

S2E8:

TRANSLATING AND NOTATING NOISE

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This week's episode of DECLASSIFY welcomes on board someone whose research and collaborative-interdisciplinary approach to music making has influenced my own practice since I attended her composition seminar as a Conservatoire student back in 2015. This is none other than prolific composer, musician, performer and noise artist and currently Professor of Music at Monash University, composer and performer Professor Cat Hope. Described by Gramophone Magazine as "one of Australia's most exciting and individual creative voices," Cat creates music, art and performances that are conceptually driven ranging from animated graphic scores for acoustic and electronic combinations and for improvisation, with a fascination with low frequency sound. Paired with her research practice and her artistic direction of *Decibel* ensemble, Cat's academic research engages with contemporary Australian music, digital music, noise music, gender equity and music technology. With such multi-faceted experience and expertise, this episode explores exclusive new music groups, how to break boundaries, the effect of marketing and what it means to make music collaboratively.

Victoria Pham

Hello hello! Welcome back to another episode of the podcast this week! I'm just here re-recording the introduction to give a little heads up to everyone about my recording microphone playing up and spontaneously producing some rustling sounds. They don't occur too often throughout the episode but I thought you should all know that the occasional very quiet leaf-like rustle sound is indeed from me – apologies about that! But moving on, This week's episode of DECLASSIFY welcomes on board someone whose research and collaborative-interdisciplinary approach to music making has influenced my own practice since I attended her composition seminar as a Conservatoire student back in 2015. This is none other than prolific and sound-maker extraordinaire and currently Professor of Music at Monash University, composer and performer Professor Cat Hope. Described by Gramophone Magazine as “one of Australia's most exciting and individual creative voices,” Cat creates music, art and performances that are conceptually driven ranging from animated graphic scores for acoustic and electronic combinations and for improvisation, with a fascination with low frequency sound. Paired with her research practice and her artistic direction of *Decibel* ensemble, Cat's academic research engages with contemporary Australian music, digital music, noise music, gender equity and music technology. I have to say like, really thank you so much for for coming on board and being so enthusiastic. I really appreciate it.

Cat Hope

Thanks, Victoria. Nice to meet you. It's lovely to meet you. I love I love what you're doing. I've listened to pretty much all of your series. I think John Davis put me on to it, I think when he did his so yeah, it's I really enjoyed it all the different perspectives. It's a great project.

Victoria Pham

Thank you so much. Yes, I remember speaking with John must have been December of the year before the last was a very fruitful and kind of really hopeful, hopeful conversation.

Cat Hope

Right

Victoria Pham

But moving into more hopeful conversations, I wanted to ask you if you always know that you wanted to be a sound maker?

Cat Hope

No, I didn't. But when it happened, it was very certain. So I had been fiddling around with different instruments, guitar for a while. And then I kind of wanted to get more serious about music. And the teacher at my school said they needed flutes. So I started learning flute and I kind of fell in love with music. I guess my you know at the end of high school, but I fell deeply. And you know I was going to be a vet and I suddenly changed everything. To be a musician, and I have to say I never felt very strongly about the flute as such, but I really loved being involved in music. And I had another moment of affirmation, I guess, if you like of that, that dedication, when I started getting interested in very low frequency sound, I kind of fell in love with sound all over again. And realise that all this time, I loved

making sound, but I wasn't necessarily making the right one. So I changed tack a bit and focused on bass flute and bass guitar, and electronic music. And as a composer, that's kind of been part of my composition practice for many for quite a few years now.

Victoria Pham

So did you go out of studying the flute into into composition immediately, or was it performance eventually kind of led you to writing an experiment?

Cat Hope

Um, it was songwriting actually. So I, after my classical music degree, completed, I did composition as a second study with Roger Smalley. But I didn't understand it, I have to admit, I, when I spend a lot of time on a project, I never seem to do very well. But when I did something very quick, late at night, it was always well received. And so it confused me and I let it go. But then, when I was living in Europe, I got involved in playing in bands as a bass player, and I started writing songs. And that lead, actually, to improvisation. And then out of that, I started notating music and kind of became what you would consider to be a poser, I guess. But I'd always been interested in making music, I just didn't really have the right tools. And when I started really committing to graphic notation, and some of the digital tools that can facilitate, facilitate graphic notation, to kind of push it in different directions. Once that was discovered, again, you know, I just wrote a lot of music. And that happened to me in about 2000.

Victoria Pham

Oh, brilliant. Actually, remember, when I was a student at the Khan doing doing my little studies and composition, you came and did a seminar as part of the composition series in 2015, I remember you showing us all the processes of graphic notation. And up until that point, that was something I'd only really seen in textbooks. And perhaps because I was so young, and I'd only seen kind of more conventional classical music performances, I hadn't gone to see a gig that were graphic notation featured as heavily as, as the work you were showing to us. So it made a real difference. Because I remember sitting in that lecture and thinking, Hmm, I used to improvise as a pianist, and then I kind of lost that, because notation kind of forces you into a framework where you read what's given to you and I, I felt like that bit of my practice was lost. And then after that lecture with you, I was like, I'm going to try and bring that back in again, and find different languages to communicate a bit more space in the music. So thank you for that.

Cat Hope

Thank you. Thank you for that comment. I mean, I think that graphic notation, though, does tend to be ghettoised into a open area, like you know, graphic notation is more open than, let's say, common practice Western notation. But I would argue that it isn't always the case. And in my music, particularly, it's just, as you probably heard me say, in that presentation, the parameters that are fixed are different. And so my music notation is actually very controlling, and you know, what was a pictorial or whatever, like, you know, traditional notation, it but only different elements. So I've always thought then, traditional notation, things like dynamics, yes, you you follow the score, but it's pretty open what you do, how you create dynamics, for example, or the tambour of notes as often relates to some kind of historic practice thing. But ultimately, it's up to you the colour that you use, and the textures you create. But in my notation, those things are very explicit. And time is very, very explicit. But pitch, which seems to be the

focus of common practice notation is much more open. It's not completely open, but an eye. That discovery for me as someone who I was making drawings for a long time of sound, I just didn't know how to coordinate them, or share them with groups or play them. But that that was really liberating for me when I actually acknowledged that this is still still a composition that's not an open implementation. That's because I guess if my training was very, I guess you would say quite conservative, just Roger small it was actually a very interesting experimental electronic composer earlier in his career, but I think moving and teaching in Perth kind of took that out of him and I had to kind of unlearn it, or something to start again.

Victoria Pham

And you found it again in Europe.

Cat Hope

I did. And I found it. What happened really was when I kind of stumbled into academia, which, you know, it kind of pains me a little bit to say it because it's so difficult now to get jobs in academia, but I kind of stumbled in and when I revisited all those materials that I read as a student, when I was teaching them myself, I suddenly found this validation of these ideas that I didn't see the on the first pass maybe. And I, you know, reading about composers that I loved, like, adjacent to Chelsea and LIGETY and Xenakis, I started to notice that actually, these drawings I've been making were remarkably similar to a lot of their music notation, sometimes their drafts. Or sometimes what they were trying to do with their conventional notation, was kind of what I had managed to achieve with my graphic notation. And so that really spurred me on plus, I had some really great colleagues that supported that plight, and facilitated with different digital tech and programming ideas that kind of put my drawings into motion, which provided them provided a way to actually play them and scores.

Victoria Pham

She's so so beautiful, to be able to, to hear those images being I don't know how to describe this coloured, I suppose, by by salvo by music.

Cat Hope

Yeah, well, I'd always heard them. Like I heard these images in my head, I just couldn't work out how to kind of render them in real in live performance. So I tried a few different things. But it was really kind of getting these pictures that I'd made, and putting them in motion across a playhead, like a point where everyone was reading at the same time. And, yeah, it was really great effects. You know, drawing on that early inspiration and I'm doing a project at the moment where I'm we're playing these monarchist and LIGETY drawings that are actually coloured pencil drawings of pieces that they when then went on to notation and just comparing the difference because I think it will be quite startling how similar the drawing and the notation might be. Yeah, they might start in a different place, but I think they will arrive in the same.

Victoria Pham

That's interesting. Well, I look forward to, to seeing that when it comes out. I'd be intrigued to see how that we know what the similarities are, what jumps out is not similar. So yeah, I'm working

Cat Hope

on it with you know, someone who's helped me a lot as a composer Lindsay Vickery, a colleague of mine in Perth. And yeah, it's a project for this, Marcus and Henry, he's been a huge influence and huge fan of his music. So yes, just be always I don't do a lot of these kind of memory Hill dedication projects in my composition practice.

Victoria Pham

And what's the project called? Or was it untitled?

Cat Hope

So I'm tired of them. I think it's just called scorings. Or that, you know, performing Zack as as graphic notation or something like that. But yeah, it's a bit in progress. And we're presenting it at there's a NACA centenary conference in grace. Later this year.

Victoria Pham

I'm going to keep an eye out on that if it has happened later this year. See if I can go see it. When you mentioned your, your move into academia and into into research and into teaching, was that always part of the part of the plan? Because you mentioned kind of stumbling into it?

Cat Hope

No, it was never the plan. So I mean, like a lot of musicians, I didn't I just wanted to play music. When I did my degree. I didn't really know what I want to do after that. I ended up playing in bands and playing bass in bands, but flute and other things kind of concurrently. No, but I've always been quite academic in the sense that even though you know, I was I did fine at uni, I did very well as a musician, maybe less. Well as an actor, you know, my academic more academic subjects. But um, Artistic research wasn't a thing back then. In the 80s, and I went to uni, but some, it was really, I guess, I've always been really intellectually engaged with music. So I read a lot. I read a lot about composers I read a lot about music and philosophy and ideas. And, you know, I'd actually published a couple of papers, without even kind of, you know, without being in academia, which is probably quite rare on film music actually, I thought that that was what I was really interested in pursuing. So then, but then when I did stumble into it, it was the right thing because As, in some ways, it enabled my practice to flourish. And in that I was able to experiment without having to worry about the financial consequences of that. I think that's harder now than it was back then, you know, 15 years ago or whatever. But it definitely provided me with a place and with with facilities and colleagues that we we could work together. And I remember, as a freelance artist, because I was freelancers for quite a long time. You know, I had the flexibility and the ability to travel and whenever I wanted to apply for grants to help me, there's my colleagues at the University, kind of bound by the teaching schedules, but then had access to all this great tech. So there was always this really weird kind of comparison. So, it I managed to combine all of those things in my academic career so far.

Victoria Pham

So you mentioned the tech as a freelancer, would you have to, as part of a grant apply for access to these things? Or make them yourself in order to do the electronic work?

Cat Hope

Um, yeah, so I, you know, I, I kind of survived pretty much from one project to the other. And that was a combination of, I guess, technical research. So I was very interested in the relationship of sound and screen back then. And some of it was for Turing was a range of different projects. But you know, when I, when I had my first job, my second child, I started to get quite concerned about the precarity of that, and that's when I accepted the academic role. But, yeah, I can still apply for grants, I guess, as an academic, but um, yeah, I'm not sure if I completely understood your question there.

Victoria Pham

Oh, yeah. Basically, I was wondering, when you are a freelancer, because I suppose I am still a freelancer on that side of things. How like, how did you manage to get the freedom to experiment with things that were more technical or with access to facilities? Were just

Cat Hope

organic hope to collaborate with my academic colleagues? That's how, and yeah, so I would loan stuff and go and hang out there after hours. And then I would also every now and then, you know, I could apply for funding to for development projects. It was difficult, I think I had some big ideas that probably if I'd been in academia at that time, would have been more easily rendered real, but it was fine. And I liked, I liked living as an artist. I don't think there are many practising artists in academia who don't go by past a week without wondering what it'd be like just to be an artist again, but it's getting more and more precarious, as you'd know. To take on that freelance career.

INTERMISSION I

For this first intermission is a 2017 work by Cat entitled 'kaps Freed.' This is a piece for piano and electronics and this recording is from its world premiere at the Australiasian Computeer Music Conference. It is performed here by Gabriella Smart with electronics devised by Stuart James and overseen by Lindsay Vickery.

Victoria Pham

Yes. Especially now, I suppose. Yeah. Especially these last two years. I'm curious as to now that what we're talking about research in academia, from what I've understood, having read lots of recent publications, a lot of your research has been about how culture has evolved in terms of all the intersections between digital arts and provided stations, mixed media, in sound and art installations, as well as composition. I was wondering, now that you're also teaching it, how do you think the framework in terms of pedagogy has, has had to adapt in terms of an increasingly global and close cultural appetite? In learning? Music?

Cat Hope

a great question. And, you know, my, my publications are kind of, unlike a lot of academics are very disparate in that they, you know, I publish on gender and music and I publish on animated notation, and digital technology. And in the past, I've published much more around digital art and sound installations

on. And but I've become, I've always been quite an activist. I've always been very political, and it's kind of crept into my music, but it's definitely crept into my academic life. And as a senior academic, I don't do as much teaching as I did before, but I was head of school at Monash University for three and a half years. And I took their role incredibly seriously. From the perspective that you just mentioned in that how we have to change the way we teach music in these places, which are funded by the people and we should be making music for those people. That might sound very drawl. But actually, I really noticed that the environment of academia was very wide. mostly men, students didn't like that at all. And I went through a process of trying to change gender representation in, both in the music that the students played, but also the artists and staff that were involved with the students signed the school up to the key change pledge, which is a British initiative around 5050 Gender targets. And try to broaden the concept of music history to be one of a living a living concept, rather than something that we look at from the outside towards the past. And that has been very challenging because there's a huge status quo. In fact, the Australian music scene is remarkably conservative when you compare it with other places. I mean, they're, of course, conservative streams all around the world. But in Australia, I felt that certain groups were particularly marginalised. And we were in denial about that. But also experimentation was particularly ghettoised. So I, so I think we need to do things that change that. So it's the, it's the repertoire we teach. It's the context we provide for their repertoire. It's the way we deliver our materials and our response, social responsibility to the diversity of communities around Australia. I'm a big supporter of music from the past. But it can't be the only music that we focus on, we have to really think about what, who are composers now? What are they making? And how can we make avenues to facilitate other people to come in to, to make music and I think that students are very aware, most students, not all of them, but you know, depending on their background, most students are pretty much aware of this. And there's this kind of lag between the students that are coming in and the staff that are teaching. So it's kind of an you know, that's understandable, because it's generational, but I think there's this big decolonization project happening in music around the world, I feel that Canada has really led that in a meaningful way. But it's happening now in Australia, too. So I think it's a really good thing. But unfortunately, in the current political climate, there's no new funds, or new support to enable this. Change and to, it's not like, we're making new places for people to walk into, we're actually cutting out things to make space. And that's a difficult conversation to have. So, we will, you know, we welcome the I welcome the inclusivity of it fought very hard to make the music programme where I that I oversaw as inclusive and relatable to current life as possible. But there are challenges with funding in the art. So you know, someone like me, who's in academia, and art and music, where you kind of get the worst of the two worst worlds. In terms of support, and infrastruc infrastructure, you know, sometimes you kind of run my bike around near where I live, and you look at the facilities and the private schools, like, these are incredible. These students are gonna come out of here and then go, so where's the theatre? Where's because there's only one in the CBD? Oh, there's another one, you know, 30 kilometres that way. I mean, it's quite extraordinary what's happening in Australia, in terms culturally, so something needs to change.

Victoria Pham

And do you think it will change?

Cat Hope

I think there's a slow but seismic shift. The challenge is to keep that shift going. Because if you look at other seismic shifts in society, like feminism, there's been problems with that continuity line. I think more people are getting on board. And once there is more of a kind of, what's the word? You know, more people can't Yeah, the more people that agree that this is something that has to happen, the more powerful the change will be. But I do think that most people who have a lot of influence, for example, on a political arena, perhaps aren't as insightful in this regard as others that are kind of on the ground. There's still a lot of, yeah, there's a lot of what's the word, cultural baggage or European baggage around Australian music practice that's carried quite high up, and I think it's time to shake that off and try and understand a bit more about who we are as a people through our own art

Victoria Pham

section. He was just looking at the kinds of all the percentages of repertoire he was playing in terms of classical music was the big the bigger, major performing arts companies, they're so dramatic. So they see more and more local music or more music that involves communities that are on the ground in Australia.

Cat Hope

That's right. And I think this is kind of notion that somehow people don't want to see it. But, you know, that's crazy. I mean, it's just a failure of the marketing part. That's all. I mean, you look at some of the crap that gets sold. goes crazy. I mean, if you can sell, you know, fidget spinners or whatever, you can definitely sell Australian music. That's a great quote that should go.

Victoria Pham

I just thought of a question because a number of times I've been critiqued about classical music and politicising it. So why don't we what would you say to those who don't believe that art music and classical music is political? Or that we should be talking about it in a political framework?

Cat Hope

I'm going to be bad academic here and not remember any quotes. But I, you know, There's generally two thoughts, right, it's like art and politics should never mix. And then there's the other opinion, which is everything is political. If anything is funded by taxpayers money, it is political. Because we pay tax to the government and one of the government, it's, we vote, it's a political. Now, if there's a whole bunch of people with philanthropy, and they're doing their thing, it doesn't need to be political at all. But if we are using the money that people pay to the government through tax, that's, that's a political call. So that would be my first answer. The second one is it would be wonderful if there was some kind of magic barrier between politics and art making, but there's just not enough infrastructure, there's no, we've lost that this kind of support for artists, administrators are also struggling. And they don't, you know, as much as they want to, I think it's very difficult for them to support artists in a way that they would like, or don't have done in the past. So that is making I think artists are kind of mobilising in ways maybe that they haven't before. But not all artists, because, you know, if you're ranking for violinist in one of the state orchestras, you're gonna have a very different perspective about art and politics than if you're a independent artist who's trying to get funding through the State Council. So I think that it really depends on where you're coming from, and what you serve to gain from politicising art. Me I, I really believe in artists for everyone. And I love I love Italian and romantic opera. I also love experimental noise music

now. Why? Why is it that one is played in sticky basements for \$20 An hour and the other in taxpayer funded concert halls with major performing arts organisation and people on a wage for ongoing position? So some people might say, Well, that's because no one likes a nice music is horrible. But actually, listen, that's, that's, that's an extreme case. But that's not always the reason. So I think that artists have often, you know, I guess making art is a process of insight. And so often, artists can be quite political, because they see things, I think they perhaps look more carefully, sometimes. And when you do look carefully, it's very hard not to feel that you have to act. It's hard to walk away, I really believe in that saying, the standard you accept is a standard that you walk past. And it's very difficult to walk past some of these situations.

Victoria Pham

Yes, and I'm very, very grateful for you, and the work that you do, because I know that you've been very outspoken about lots of things. Thank you very, very much, because it's helped a lot of people including me, and also set a pretty good example, as well on how you can use your voice in political situations, for the art community and for the community at large.

Cat Hope

Thank you. It's very kind, not everybody likes it. Because, you know, whenever you push up against the status quo, the status quo gets nervous and and, you know, I don't blame them in an environment where they are going to lose something. I mean, it's we're working in a space where some, you know, we're not going to just rise up and find a place someone has to step aside to make room for these things. And there's something radical happens, a political agenda, but anyway, I do Didn't mean to talk about politics the whole time. No, not at all.

Victoria Pham

Well, I suppose I'll do a little segue segue into, I suppose something that is still sort of political but more artistic, which is I wanted to ask you about your opera speech was just a quick overview for anyone who, who doesn't have that much information about it. It's an opera. That's what it is that you generated a graphic notation school from, and you reacted not reacted, but it's generated from the 2014 Human Rights Commission project, because it's titled The Forgotten children. And this is everything that that the opera has come from and how you transformed I suppose a political document into a work of art, which then won the art musical 120 20. I was curious as to both the process and how, how you managed to get a work of that intensity, something this powerful performed on the stage was mentioned very briefly before as to you know, the difference between the romantic and the more experimental how this managed to, to get so much force behind it?

Cat Hope

Well, I'm, I'm a huge opera fan, I used to play in an Opera Orchestra as a flute player. But I would never write an opera, like the operas I love. You know, it goes back to what I said earlier about music for the people. Now, that means something to us. And our prayers have always treated big themes being human, human, and what's not humanitarian. But yeah, human beings, human condition themes. And I guess, going back to the politics very briefly, I was very frustrated at the situation in Australia, and I kind of couldn't work out what to do with the tools that I had, I'm not a nurse or a lawyer. I can't just go to a refugee camp or, you know, represent people pro bono or something like that. So I decided to try and

make a work where I could create, I guess, encourage people to think about these difficult issues in a new way, and share my frustration, but also perhaps empower people to act. So the process of the opera really it was the report is this kind of generic government document. It's got a kind of graphic design. It's got drawings by refugee children in it and lots of graphs. And I what I did is I kind of inverted the idea of libretto, as you said, there's no words in the opera. But I use the children's drawings, this colour scheme of the graphic design, and these graphs as material for my graphic score. So I the musicians kind of reread the document through this this process. So you know, because one thing I've learned is that that kind of yelling at people about what's right and wrong isn't really effective. And that's really what was happening to Julian Triggs, when she presented that report to the Australian Government. They are Tony Abbott just told it was politicised and left and we read the thing. It's just a bunch of facts. So yeah, so I it took a long time I started when I was residents in the Pete number Hicks house that gave me a bit of space away from academia to focus on this idea. And gradually over time chipped away this this piece, and it was it's a very calmative thing, it brings in lots of different things that I've done in the past. So my noise practice my electronic music practice, kind of a lot of graphics scoring techniques that I've developed the idea of sampling music in real time, that's a big part of a lot of my compositions. So really brought together a whole bunch of things. And with the support of my group discover music ensemble, they, they kind of were in the orchestra helping never so familiar with my music and live scoring techniques that were really great lever. But I'd worked a lot in Perth, where I spent most of my adult life I guess, with tourney music, and they were fantastic supports of mine, and particularly this project and they helped me to get it off the ground. So funding applications and then liaising with the Perth festival to make the premiere in 2019. And I'm just in the process of organising a rematch of it in Hamburg in 2023, so I'm thrilled because it's, it kind of happened taught you know, any remounts were just off the table because COVID was the next thing that happened. So yeah, and I did it in a I didn't do it in a conventional music way i i organised a kind of showing a kind of development process of the music that wasn't staged in Adelaide with the help of vital statistics, fantastic organisation there. And then that kind of gave us that enabled me to test this idea. If I could create a piece of music that enables people to empathise with the issue. So, if you listen to a piece of music, it's a piece of music. But if you know what it's about, if you read the programme now, I think it really does empower people to think differently about this difficult thing and keep keep it on their mind. And in the actual premiere, when it was staged, you know, we had amnesty and refugee organisations at the after, you know, at the concerts, giving talks, taking donations or having forums and so on. So that if it did succeed, there was an opportunity for people to act, or find out more about how they might engage with this issue, and basically keep it alive so that people don't forget about these people in detention. And this still, you know, most children have been removed from detention Australia. That's true. But there's still a lot of people in detention, as you've probably heard recently. In Melbourne, that whole business, detention, hotels, hotels. Yes, yeah. I think that's I think that's the story that you wanted to hear.

Victoria Pham

Well, I mean, I like that you invited all these organisations to be integrated into the way that the work is presented, because it allows it to be active. And not

Cat Hope

Yeah, goes beyond kind of virtue, signalling and interaction perhaps. And then the other concept in the opera is that it's, it's going back to this for the people concept. The idea is that every place is

performed, the people of that place perform it. So there might be a couple of people that come in to assist. But you know, the choir is a, it's a community choir, they're not music readers, they were, they all learned the graphic notation by heart. The, for soloists, they're not opera singers, there's a, there's a heavy metal singer, an improv singer, there is one opera singer, and there was a kind of more folk orientated, Persian singer. And then the orchestra, not just classical musicians, the pop that can be any type of music, as long as they've got a level of musicianship, you know, they're all able to read the score. So there's, it's actual presentation is also quite political in that, you know, you bring people together who are interested in interested in this concept, I didn't really realise until this project that my notation is actually incredibly accessible to all kinds of musicians. And it's a possibility to bring people together in a way that perhaps other types of practices that meet Western notation don't. And that kind of, you know, blows apart that kind of mystery that, that people have around music notation, like, you know, if you don't read music, it's just like a whole bunch of stuff on the page. Whereas people when they look at this notation that kind of work out what's going on. It looks like it sounds sometimes.

Victoria Pham

So when the work was to hand back, there'll be another local community putting the CNRS Yeah.

Cat Hope

Well, that's, I'd love to work with a refugee choir in Hamburg. But we're working towards just getting all the details together. Now.

Victoria Pham

I suppose I look forward to seeing this opera, perhaps being toured more and seeing all the different communities that get together around this work. gratulations Thank you.

Cat Hope

He was supposed to say that that's happening, but like.

Victoria Pham

So it's like coming out of this work in which you had such an inclusive approach to it in terms of making and presentation. When it comes to other aspects of making, whether it's in an institution, for example, like Monash University, or in a degree or some sort of curriculum, do you think that something kind of infrastructure, like having a quota in place to teach certain types of music, to ensure that there's a level of diversity or inclusion are useful tools? To start that?

Cat Hope

Yeah. Good question. I, I know that there's a lot of debate about quotas, but I did a lot of research before I introduced them. And I'm glad that I did, it was a bit painful at the start. But I, I found that just you know, suggesting and encouraging was not doing the trick. And so it almost like you have to give the system a bit of a shock, like, like a one off. Like, but there is none or what about the Masters in all these kinds of things, and people work out. Once you get going that it's going to be okay. There's still room to teach Beethoven and you know, not as much as it was before it goes back to what I was saying before about someone has to stand aside. But it's usually okay. So I think that in such in, when you have such entrenched practices, you need to kind of somehow shock the system into a change. And

these days, you know, no one's around long enough to see something through a 12 year period or whatever of constant like, slowly shifting the steering the ship in another direction. So, that's why I went that, I think it is important. And I do believe, you know, the argument against quotas is basically is one that says, well, there aren't any. But there are like, there are amazing music, music is amazing music by people from around the world or from within Australia in different cultural backgrounds. Women are great composers, there's lots of them. Why is it that you can't find them? That's a better question to ask not Do they exist. And I think quote, is kind of direct deals with that problem. It makes people look in a way that it's not right, right in their face. And so responding to queries means you learn to look for things that perhaps you wouldn't normally know you should look for. That's my theory anyway. And I Yes, I would encourage anyone who's doing something like that, you know, I, I, I mean, personally, I didn't always, I wasn't particularly inclusive. In my own practice. I mean, in my own programming, but the early days of disability, I mean, I didn't include lots of women, just because I'm a woman, doesn't mean I knew lots of other women or, and I, I guess I kind of looked at my own practices. And it's been quite challenging for me to change them as well. But it's been worth it. And I've found so much material I never would have found otherwise. So I guess I feel that I've really learned something positive out of the experience of giving myself quarters. And I do think it had a positive outcome at the university two,

Victoria Pham

I think it's a great tool, I suppose, or first step to begin to change your writing, trying to do things by through suggestion doesn't always translate in, actually,

Cat Hope

oh, yeah, you're right. There's some people really push back. And, you know, if we talk about women, for example, coders are women, some women don't want to be, you know, quote, I mean, I could totally understand that. I don't want to be your token women, cuz you need one. But and I used to feel like that, but after a while, I said, You know what, I'm gonna take it, because it might be the only way I'm gonna get it. Like, you know, I always just thought I wasn't good enough. I never really thought about this stuff about why women weren't getting many opportunities, I think, yeah, now I have a much more intersectional approach. And I realise it's not just women, it's a whole bunch of other socio economic, cultural factors that come into play, and I'm much I'm trying, I'm learning all the time, you know, about how to do these things better. And I've, you know, I've made mistakes along the way. And hopefully, as I get older, I make lists of those. But I think that's it. That's okay, you know, the you. You need to make mistakes to learn, you're not going to get it right all the time. And I really do believe in risk taking. So that's a good learning space. Right?

INTERMISSION 2:

For our second intermission is a second work by Cat Hope "Their Lives are stripped of meaning" released in 2018. This recording the premiere performance of a work for voice, trumpet and electronics performed by Callum G'Froerer and Olivia Stahn.

Victoria Pham

Yes, I think so, too. And what you mentioned before about, oh, there aren't any, we can't find any, as you were saying that I was thinking of a conversation I recently had with some musicians and artists,

and we were talking about the electronic music world is some improvisation that's now integrating with classical music or whatever classical music means now, but also the kind of new music Amistad movement. I'm wondering why you think those particular movements which came about in the 60s and the 70s, are still talked about as brand new, even though they're disciplines that have happened, you know, half a century ago, and why they still feel so exclusive for so many musicians practising today.

Cat Hope

What do you mean by exclusive in that context? Well,

Victoria Pham

when I show up to those gigs, they're always the same people, the same contemporary new music, experimental people, and increasingly less and less members of the public. It just, it feels academic, I suppose, is one of those.

Cat Hope

It's like a little, it's like a guitar, right? Like, yes. And I use that word deliberately because it's, they've been separated out from only other music. And, you know, there's a kind of hardcore group of people who support it. And you know, and then there's all these other people that don't and that that creates is kind of weird vacuum effect where there's just gets smaller and smaller and tighter and tighter, instead of expanding and I do think a part of it is this marketing problem I was talking about before But I do, I think you're right. I mean, I'm always frustrated that people talk about experimental music as a movement in the foot 40s started by John Cage, like that, you know, that that's quite a long time ago now, like 80 years ago. And yet still, we look at that, that music is experimental. So still we look at formulas 33 as a crazy thing. We still we, you know, I guess someone I'm on film and might be more accepted now, and maybe, you know, less revolutionary or crazy. But you know, a lot of those experimental works from that period CEU, kind of in that little ghetto thing. And I spent a lot of time thinking about this, and how, you know, and let's talk about it, like, who was my colleagues? does, is it really, that people just don't like it like, is melody and harmony, so integral to music, as soon as you remove that, you've lost your audience already. So that's, you know, that's a challenging question for someone like me, who doesn't, you know, design much melody or harmony, you know, my work. So, but I think they're, I just think it's the way it's institutionalised music has been institutionalised along these very clearly defined silos. And when you have art, experimental art, music, it's like a subculture of classical music or whatever, we western music, whatever you want to call it, rather than flourishing alongside it. It's like the poor, dirty cousin that you don't want anyone to see. And only a few people are allowed in, you know, and that makes it look exclusive. Whereas actually, it's just sidelined. That's a huge challenge. Someone organisation perspective, right. So I find it but I do believe that a lot of these problems are very much in Australia, and not so much happening. Same way overseas. So you're, you said before that you're in the UK.

So you know, you might be finding these tiny little, little subgroups. But I know with my group decibel, when we left Perth, and went and played in the south of Germany as part of the German radio, new music series, they treated us like we were normal, like we were musicians in Western art discipline, was in Perth, we were treated like weirdos and, and I realised actually that, yeah, Australia, we're still kind of figuring this stuff out. And in Europe, there's a lot more respect for innovation in music and art.

And perhaps, we need to understand that these kinds of experiments are necessary for the form to, to develop. And let's face it, most experimental music has never been huge, like, we're looking things retrospectively. Some artists look major, because they published a lot, and they'd push this stuff out there, over and over again. And their reputation is probably grown over time, you know, beyond the death, as have other composers that we know. So I, I think, kind of contemporary new art music has a has a image problem. And I don't think it needs to be that way. Because it's exciting. It's, it's, people really do, there is an audience for new and innovative things. But when we keep referencing ourselves, and you get this kind of circular thing, that's a bit of a into like a little drain. And that's when you get this exclusive thing. But if we're open and willing to share these ideas and promote them as something worthwhile, exciting, and relevant, I think we have an opportunity to move out of that get her and into a different platform. And that's really up to those. Yeah, I guess how, how we sell ourselves as composers and musicians and some great I think this drain an orchestra. I sorry, the well, maybe them as well. But yeah, Australian Chamber Orchestra is a great example of who's managed to do that to some degree. You know, they, I'm not sure about now so much, but I know over the career, they've managed their place and pretty good out there things as well as you know, more experimental things, but also the, you know, International Contemporary on some bison in the US and, you know, Legacy groups like ensemble Medan I mean, ensemble content around this. These are major groups and they're playing music by living composers that is out there. So it doesn't have to be that way.

Victoria Pham

Exactly, it's just I suppose it is about a little bit about marketing.

Cat Hope

But also sounds horrible, doesn't it to, you know to distil it down to that. But I do believe, you know, we complain about being marketed to all the time, right? Like we, we hide it, but actually, you know, popular music is excellent at that. We have a lot to learn from that commercial music, you know, they've, they've got that whole selling thing stitched up. I think we could learn quite a lot from that, and not expect that we will be supported all the time by some other means, because that means is falling away, I think. But while it still exists, that's I guess it goes back to the political questions. Back there.

Victoria Pham

I suppose it's about communicating clearly what is music,

Cat Hope

communicating and celebrating it, not hiding it, celebrating it and insisting on a space next to you know, major, contemporary major music ensembles, London Sinfonietta, the Barbican is another great example of a place that puts all this stuff together. I think there's opportunities here, and we have to stop playing victim and get a little bit more strident in what we what we think will work. And you know, in Australia, unfortunately, I think a lot of experimental artists feel pushed down. So it's very difficult to fight back when you have nothing right. Easy for me to say that. It's not that easy for a lot of musicians and ensembles to feel that they can ask or they can expect a certain type of role or position, I guess,

Victoria Pham

I suppose, coming coming off that I always ask this question at the end, which is, do you have any pieces of advice for any experimental classes or musicians, particularly those who who are kind of not categorised in anything that's traditional, in how they can seek to make a broder impact on contemporary music?

Cat Hope

I think my one word of advice would be collaboration, you're stronger in numbers. You know, I would really encourage people to find other people like them, like minded and work together, support each other. Hold each other up. It can be very isolating, if you don't know where you fit, and you're not part of a major movement or something that's been running the same way for the last 200 years or whatever. You know, and that's, that's coming from my own experience. That's what really helped me, you kind of, I guess, I'm trying to avoid saying something, I find your own people because that critic, the good, I think that you're talking about before, but actually, together, you can make things happen. You can change, you grow confidence, you can experiment in an environment where you feel supported, and you don't have to worry, anybody thinks it's silly, or it doesn't work, you know, you're going to make mistakes. So have people around you who will say, Yeah, I didn't really work. But I reckon if we do this might, you know, you need you need people around you. I think that that's a really good way to I think it's an important part of innovation. Because it, you're more able to get momentum, as a group and your take turns and looking after each other. I think that would be my biggest piece of advice and and, you know, care for those relationships so that they flourish, and they'll last your whole lifetime if you tend to them. And then they will, you know, even if you move on in different directions, they'll still be there to support you. And I yeah, I think that's probably the main one. Otherwise, you know, just remember that art is still incredibly important, whether we call it whatever it gets called entertainment, or, you know, our music or pop commercial music or whatever, the core is the same. It's an expression of who we are. And if we just remember that there's lots of different ways to express ourselves. They're all valid. And sometimes we love it and share it. Other times. It's not for us, but that's a healthy sign. It's not a it's not a thing to be afraid of. Don't be afraid of criticism, and don't be afraid to give it because that's the only way we'll grow and change. So if someone you know, sometimes, you know, put yourself in opportunities where you are open to there is debate or quick bore critique because might be hard at the start, but you will become stronger and Do you grow as a result of that? I think we're living in a bit of a culture where everyone's too scared to say anything. So a little collaborative group, that's a really great, safe space for that type of critique.

Victoria Pham

It's great because the community allows you where you can have sessions where you can be very honest with each other about grow together.

Cat Hope

Yeah, that's a great way to put it

Victoria Pham

Yes. And I'm happy to announce anything or anything. Should you want anything? Additional? Yes. And that's pretty much it. I'm great. Thank you.

Cat Hope

Thank you. Thanks for asking me and including me in your illustrious lineup. And good luck with your PhD.

Victoria Pham

Thank you so much. I hope you have a wonderful evening and a walk and thank you again so much for speaking with me. For everyone out there listening, thank you for listening this far and apologies again about all the rustling microphone sounds. You can check out information about Cat's work, details about her Opera 'Speechless' which we touched on as well as her research. You can also further support Cat by purchasing her music and albums, including her German Critics Prize winning monograph CD 'Ephemeral Rivers.' Thanks for listening and catch you all next time!

Cat Hope website: <https://www.cathope.com/>

<https://research.monash.edu/en/persons/cat-hope>