

**TRIOS
FOR
TWO**



MOLLY GEBRIAN (VIOLA)

DANNY HOLT (PIANO/PERCUSSION)

Casey Cangelosi

1. *Theatric No. 8* (2010) 10:38

Karl Blench

Second Take (2010)

2. The Beginning 1:41
3. Barbarism 1:25
4. Familiar Terrain 1:23
5. In Abstract 2:34
6. The End 3:19

Daniel Corral

7. *Ultramarine* (2010) 9:51

Christopher Goddard

8. *Third Nature* (2010) 11:42

Ingrid Lee

9. *Nomentum* (2010) 6:12

Chiayu

Black and White (2015)

10. White 8:47
11. Black 4:16

Total: 61:52

All world premiere recordings



© Molly Gebrian & Danny Holt. All Rights Reserved, 2017.
innova® Recordings is the label of the
American Composers Forum.
www.innova.mu www.mollygebrian.com www.dannyholt.net



Trios for Two is many things: an innovative experiment, a beautiful and sometimes ridiculous spectacle, and also the result of a twenty-year friendship. My solo piano/percussion project stems from what I'd characterize as a sense of playful creative restlessness—a somewhat obsessive need to push myself beyond what I already know I am capable of. Playing solo piano/percussion is one thing. Adding another performer into the mix really escalates the absurdity and also the potential of the whole thing. Molly is a truly beautiful and dedicated musician, and I am consistently blown away by the patience, care, steady focus, and sense of adventure that she brings to our work. I hope you will enjoy a glimpse into our world. Many thanks to this wonderful group of composers for going on this crazy ride with us.

DANNYHOLT.NET



Danny

Despite being longtime friends, when **Trios for Two** started in 2010, it was the first time Danny and I had collaborated. One of my doctoral degree requirements at Rice University was a large, independent project. I called Danny from my kitchen while cooking dinner one night and out of that brainstorming session, **Trios for Two** was born. It has been interesting to me as a violist to see how many of the composers were inspired by this instrumentation to use “noisy” extended techniques, in a way making the viola yet another percussion instrument. To me, it is fitting that my first album is the result of this project. Danny is the one who introduced me to contemporary music and ignited my passion for performing the music of our time. In many ways, he is the reason I am a musician, and his constant curiosity, mad-cap creativity, and unfailing dedication continue to inspire me.

MOLLYGEBRIAN.COM



Molly

Of the works on this disc, **Casey Cangelosi's** *Theatric No. 8* uses the most pared-down instrumentation: the piano is augmented with kick drum and hi-hat. With the composer's blessing, Danny chose to add snare drum (played with a foot pedal). The piece is an obsessive minimalist exploration. In the composer's own words: "The driving force and functionality behind *Theatric No. 8* is perspective rather than process. Instead of a gradual linear evolution of change, the musical material is treated as a quasi three-dimensional object...As more perspectives are presented, more detail in the musical object is revealed. As time goes on, the interest is no longer on the initial musical object, but in the details discovered."

CASEYCANGELOSI.COM

Second Take, by **Karl Blench**, grew out of his earlier piece for viola, clarinet, and piano, also commissioned by Molly Gebrian. That piece, *Book of Mental Imagery*, is a series of nine miniatures, which share a musical language and structure with *Second Take*. The premiere of *Mental Imagery* was derailed by the Icelandic volcano that erupted in the spring of 2010, stranding the pianist in Europe and causing the premiere to be delayed indefinitely. *Second Take* is therefore not only a second look at the musical material from *Mental Imagery*, but also a second attempt at trying to get this music out into the world. Of this work, the composer writes, "The five move-

ments of *Second Take* are much like a series of paintings; they can stand alone as small independent works, but are connected by common musical language that binds them together."

KARLBLENCH.NET

Ultramarine, by **Daniel Corral**, oscillates between heavy-rock grooves, sparse and still textures, and places in between. This piece also makes use of unusual timbres in the viola (playing with the wood of the bow to produce a scraping or tapping sound, playing on the wood of the instrument to produce a hissing sound), which extends the percussion writing into the viola part. Although not apparent on the surface, the entire work is an extrapolation of the 12-bar blues form, which relates to the title: ultramarine is the name of a particular blue pigment with a rich history dating back to 6th century cave paintings in Afghanistan. As it happens, there is another connection to painting: while composing *Ultramarine*, the composer had a book of paintings by Lori Hersberger. According to the composer, Hersberger's style influenced the piece "with its broad gestures implying motion, color contrast, negative space, and abstract form."

SPINALFROG.COM

Although on the surface, *Third Nature* by **Christopher Goddard** appears to be the piece

on this album that is the closest to a traditional viola sonata, it is actually a drama with three (or only two?) different characters. The composer writes: “The violist, pitted against a performer wearing two different hats, seeks to reconcile the two as they spar with one another over the course of the work. While they are placated from time to time, the characters inevitably descend into a frenzied battle, only to emerge without a victor; the mediator is then left to humbly remark on the futility of their efforts.” In many ways, the violist is both the narrator (starting and ending the piece alone) and also a participant in the struggle between the piano and percussion. In addition to the triumvirate who are the characters in this drama, the number 3 is important in other ways. Goddard writes: “Thirds abound as intervallic material, the music is comprised of three contrasting characters, and the architecture is quite clearly delineated by three points of climax.”

CHRISTOPHERGODDARD.COM

Much of **Ingrid Lee**’s work explores acoustic sounds that contain elements usually belonging to electronic music. Described by the composer as “an experiment in static motion and controlled chaos,” *Nomentum* takes full advantage of a broad range of sonic possibilities inherent in *Trios for Two*. Lee writes that “the possibilities for exploring these sounds in this particular

instrumentation are expansive; sounds like the interrupted triangle, the scraped brake drum, and the bow distortion in the viola, which comprises both the complexity of noise and the irregularity in the sound of electromagnetic interference.”

INGRIDEEL.COM

The two movements of *Black and White*, by **Chiayu**, highlight extreme contrasts in character: the first movement (*White*) is largely consonant and explores different timbres and registers, especially in the viola. In direct contrast, the second movement (*Black*) is angular and driven, a real *tour de force* for both instruments. About this piece, the composer writes, “*Black and White* is inspired by the colors and the symbol of Ying and Yang. In *White*, the music tries to depict representation of this color as innocence, purity, open, and new beginnings. In *Black*, the music tries to interpret the ideas of strong, contained, mysterious, and endings. While each movement has its own characteristics, the piece also incorporates the concept that Ying and Yang are contrary forces, but at the same time they complement, interconnect, and interrelate to one another. To reflect this idea, some of the motives can be traced in both movements; however, the different transformations of the motives create the contrasting characteristics in each movement.”

CHIAYUHSU.COM

– Molly Gebrian & Danny Holt

Produced by Molly Gebrian & Danny Holt
Executive producers: Jerald & Madelyn Jackrel
Recorded at The Wild Beast, CalArts, Valencia, CA (January/May 2016)
Recorded, edited, and mixed by Clay Chaplin
Additional recording by John Baffa
Mastered by Wayne Peet at Newzone Studio, Los Angeles
Yamaha CFIIIS Piano • Piano technician: Alan Eder
Technical assistance: John C. Gilliland III
Album artwork: Siri Stensberg ARTBYSIRI.COM
Photos: Carlin Ma (MG), Joe Lambie (DH)

With special thanks to: CalArts Herb Alpert School of Music, Miriam Schulman,
Jerald & Madelyn Jackrel, Melody Lin, Ian Stahl, and Louis Stephens.

Many thanks also to over 100 **Kickstarter** supporters!

This recording was made possible in part by a University Research and Creative
Activity grant from University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

Innova is supported by an endowment from the McKnight Foundation.

Philip Blackburn, director, design
Chris Campbell, operations director
Steve McPherson, publicist



Photo: Harry Bromley-Davenport