

Miolina's Self-Titled Debut Album: the Sonic Embodiment of Personhood

JILLIAN DEGROOT

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Miolina's self-titled debut album, released on Composers Concordance Records in February 2018, is a refreshing patchwork of memory, with each track existing as a snapshot of violinists Mioi Takeda and Lynn Bechtold. Drawing its name from a blending of two identities, this album stands as sonic embodiment of personhood.

The opening track, Karen Tanaka's *Shibuya Tokyo*, is named after one of the busiest railway stations in Tokyo. The piece opens with both violinists in a rapid rhythmic ostinato, reminiscent of hiccuping train wheels speeding along the track. The momentum starts the journey, but the wailing chaos of a solo violin interjects in a display of aggressive and virtuosic prowess. Though short, this track acts almost as an overture for the album as the listener embarks on a sonic journey through Miolina's neurological cache.

Away/Home 1.2 for two violins & electronics, written by Miolina's own Lynn Bechtold, grapples with sounds associated with going away and coming home. As the piece unfolds, Bechtold intertwines electronic sounds and slowly changing string harmonics. Interjections of found sound emerge then dissolve into the texture. A solo melodic line bleeds into a flock of birds. A violin responds to the call of a crow. A screaming tea kettle meets the sound of a train engine leaving the station. Thoughtfully crafted and beautifully executed, these aural manifestations of memories and associations feel like falling down the rabbit hole to different destinations in time.

Angélica Negrón's *Tres insultos para dos violines* explores the different ways insults can translate to musical gestures. Each of the three movements represents a specific offense, starting with teasing and ridicule, then by ignoring, and finally with the act of repeated harassment. Bringing energy and persistence to each bow stroke, Takeda and Bechtold personify a nefarious incarnation, only to eventually fall into the solemn, lonely representation of the cold

shoulder. Then, a childlike musical figure enters the room to relentlessly harass in one last playful provocation.

Composed for and premiered by Miolina in 2014, *Lateral Line: Three Electric Fish* by **Melissa Grey** and **Jan de Weille** is a deep sea dive into the dark depths of open waters. The static crackles in the stereo mix by de Weille are suggestive of popping ears as the water pressure mercilessly bears down. A rhythmic undercurrent floats beneath the surface of the electronics, as the sound of the violin looks up to the surface of the water, unsure of how far away it has sunk.

Written after an exciting live performance by an energetic violin duo, *Scene for Miolina* by **Milica Paranosic** materializes the inspiration and recreation of a memory. Opening with rapid tremolo figures, the suspense ultimately leads to two voices in dialogue. Long finger slides distort the sound of converging violins until they separate into reborn independent lines. Showcasing the duo's vibrancy and warmth of expression, this piece is a refreshing interlude on the album's exploration of self.

Dan Cooper's *Spinning Song for solo violin and electronics* features a compelling mixture of contemporary dance rhythms, the sound of spinning coins, and Bechtold on solo violin. The title references the medieval secular songs sung by maidens while spinning cloth, and Bechtold's solo line lays down hard. The electronic rhythmic foundation exists to support brilliance of sound, technical mastery, and stunning expressivity; Bechtold does not disappoint.

Written for the New York Miniaturist Ensemble, *TAG for two violins and electronic drone* features a subconscious drone resting beneath scordatura harmonics. The atmosphere it creates is metaphysical, a long sweeping gesture with transforming colors of smoky blue, dark maroon, and evergreen. With the title referencing a graffiti tags, this piece is purposefully a short, single gesture written quickly by American composer **Jeff Myers**.

Gene Pritsker's *Empty Bottles* elicits memories of nights spent drinking with friends. Dissonance spawns from an out-of-tune sustain in the second violin as the solo violin states melodic material, soon to be

transformed by a variety of musical styles and violin techniques. The duo fashions sincere nostalgia out of wild licks and quirky gestures before they return to the wacky intonation from the beginning, committing to the recollection of this memory fully.

Miolina is joined by percussionists **Ian Ding** and **Eric Millstein** on **Judd Greenstein's** *ILL for two violins, marimba, & drum kit*. Using the “tsss-ip” sound of the high hat as inspiration, the strings and percussion create a rhythmic drive inspired by early 90s hip hop. The glissando in the violins often mimic turntables while the marimba lays down the groove. All four musicians display incredible command of their instruments in this hip-hop-meets-Miolina mash up.

Though originally a sad song by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Bechtold's arrangement of *Tears, A Lament* is an adaptation for two violins and electronics. Sculpting both electronic and acoustic sounds into evocations of the late 19th century, this piece is appropriately fitting as the final portrait of this recollective self-titled album. The two violins sing in duet with rhapsodic sensitivity, while a disembodied voice attempts to disrupt. The duo remains undisturbed as the sound fades to silence.

What does it mean to know someone? With the debut of their self-titled album, Miolina offers thoughtfully-constructed and expertly-crafted pieces of themselves woven together with conviction, presenting the personal through the sonic embodiment of reflection, memory, and identity.