



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: TRAILBLAZERS: Sonatas by Henriëtte Bosmans, Ethel Smyth, and Dora Pejačević

“Trailblazers”—three women who were unabashedly themselves, defying the social expectations of their time. The underappreciated music of Henriëtte Bosmans (openly queer), Ethel Smyth (suffragette leader), and Dora Pejačević (rejected her nobility) is brought together for the first time on this recording in brand new transcriptions for viola that grab the attention of the listener and elevate the lives of three extraordinary women.

North American violist MOLLY GEBRIAN arranged the works and collaborated on this recording with pianist DANNY HOLT, whom the late Alan Rich once described as “phenomenal”. “Violists are always looking for ways to augment our repertoire,” explains Gebrian, “and I am especially drawn towards periods of history where there is a dearth of music for the viola.” Unlike the violin and cello, where displays of soloistic virtuosity are commonplace, the viola was largely ignored by composers as a solo instrument until the twentieth century. Gebrian continues, “These three sonatas, originally written for cello, not only fill a gap in the late-Romantic repertoire for violists but are clearly outstanding pieces that deserve much wider recognition. It also happens to be a critical time for women’s rights, and these three composers pushed the boundaries of what was acceptable for women during their lifetimes. Their lives and work serve as a powerful inspiration for the generations that have come after them.”

Gebrian’s album notes describe the life of each composer and their historical context. Henriëtte Bosmans (1895–1952) was a Dutch pianist and composer, whose life was shaped by the death of her cellist father and her family’s Jewish identity during Nazi occupation, her early relationship with prominent cellist (and later Dutch resistance leader) Frieda Belinfante, and prominent solo work with the Concertgebouw Orchestra in the 1930s. English composer Dame Ethel Mary Smyth (1858–1944) defied her father for the opportunity to study music in Leipzig, where she met Brahms, Dvořák, Clara Schumann, and Tchaikovsky. She went on to be a prominent figure in the British women’s suffrage movement alongside Emmeline Pankhurst (1858–1928), writing the music that was adopted as their protest anthem, and getting arrested and imprisoned for her beliefs. Pianist and composer Dora Pejačević (1885-1923) was born into one of Croatia’s oldest lines of nobility, but she rejected the privilege of her class—“I simply cannot understand how people can live without work... I despise them because of this... the truth is that I cannot continue to associate with the members of my own class.”—working as a nurse during the Great War and requesting a commoner’s burial.

Each sonata is a substantial work—Bosmans (21 min), Smyth (20 min), Pejačević (27 min)—and tests the mettle of the performers both individually and in ensemble with each other. Each work has a drama and intensity that perhaps reflect the loss, upheaval, and challenges at the turn of the twentieth century. The album opens with the brooding sweep of the Bosmans, clearly shaped by the time of its composition (1919) at the end of the War and during the “Spanish” influenza.

The album drops on Tuesday, February 6, 2024 to all streaming services. Retail downloads and hardcopy are available from the label, www.acisproductions.com.

[#trailblazingwomen](https://twitter.com/trailblazingwomen) [#womenshistory](https://twitter.com/womenshistory) [#violasonatas](https://twitter.com/violasonatas) [#henriettebosmans](https://twitter.com/henriettebosmans) [#ethelsmyth](https://twitter.com/ethelsmyth) [#pejacevic](https://twitter.com/pejacevic)

Press Contact: Geoffrey Silver: geoffrey.silver@acisproductions.com (646) 320-8425

DPK (graphics, links, booklet, physical CD request): www.acisproductions.com/trailblazers-gebrian-holt-pressdpk

Catalogue Number: APL54162

Street Date: February 6, 2024

Acis

Dr. Molly Gebrian is a professional violist with a background in neuroscience. Holding degrees in both music and neuroscience from Oberlin College and Conservatory, New England Conservatory of Music, and Rice University, her area of expertise is applying the science of learning and memory to practicing and performing. Given this expertise, she is a frequent presenter on the neuroscience of practicing at conferences, universities, and music festivals in the US and abroad. Her book, *Learn Faster, Perform Better: A Musician's Guide to the Neuroscience of Practicing* will be released in Fall 2024 by Oxford University Press. As a violist, her performing is focused on promoting the music of marginalized composers, particular those from groups traditionally underrepresented in classical music. Her principal teachers include Peter Slowik, Carol Rodland, James Dunham and Garth Knox. Previously, she was the viola professor at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and the University of Arizona. After a decade of teaching viola at the collegiate level, she will join the faculty at New England Conservatory of Music in Fall 2024 to teach courses on the science of practicing.

www.mollygebrian.com

Called “phenomenal” by the late music critic Alan Rich, and hailed as one of the “local heroes” of the Los Angeles music scene (*LAcitybeat.com*), pianist DANNY HOLT performs around the globe in concert halls (Carnegie Hall, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Hollywood Bowl), clubs (Joe’s Pub, The Blue Whale, Copenhagen Jazzhouse) art galleries (MASS MoCA, Hammer Museum), churches, living rooms, and wherever else he can find a piano and someone to listen. He has performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Blue Man Group, the Bang on a Can All-Stars, the California EAR Unit, and the Calder Quartet, and he has held fellowships at the Bang On a Can Summer Music Institute, the Weill Music Institute at Carnegie Hall, and New England Conservatory’s Summer Institute for Contemporary Performance Practice. His recorded catalog includes the recent solo album *Piano Music of Mike Garson* and other solo, chamber, and orchestral releases on the Innova Recordings label, pfMENTUM, New World Records, Deutsche Grammophon, and L’st records. Holt holds degrees from California Institute of the Arts, Hampshire College, Smith College, and Interlochen Arts Academy.

www.dannyholt.net

Acis is one of America’s leading independent classical record labels that boasts a roster of GRAMMY®-winning and nominated artists. Founded by twice GRAMMY®-nominated producer, conductor Geoffrey Silver (original co-founder of New York Polyphony, former Chorus Master of twice GRAMMY®-winning The Washington Chorus), the label has a track record of excellence in the fields of early music, choral, and organ, and champions both emerging and established artists in North America and Europe—particularly women and artists of color.

www.acisproductions.com

ENDS/