

otherhood takes the vessel of your being and dips it underwater, revealing where all the cracks may leak. It has the potential to bring the essential you, the good and the bad, to the forefront, from which you cannot hide. To the forefront, it also brings your priorities, your goals, and your future. Motherhood is a time of focusing and refocusing, a time of looking inward, a time for all else to fall away.

In a country and in a time that can still be unaccommodating towards mothers and families, the creative world comes with some of its own unique challenges for artist mothers. It is a world that has long said that by choosing to have a family we no longer choose our art or our careers, and may be forced to forfeit opportunities, unless our finances and family support systems allow it to be otherwise.

Historically speaking, artist mothers of today have a much easier world to navigate. Of notable artist mothers who explored the topic of motherhood explicitly, in her book *Of Woman Born*, esteemed poet and essayist Adrienne Rich (1929–2012) speaks of her own experience as a mother of three in the 1950s: the anger, the isolation, and the defeat. The institution of Motherhood, as she shows it, historically and in her time, is one that serves the patriarchy, and that institution is in opposition (and often detrimental) to the Motherhood we each experience individually. While much has advanced, it is still something we must actively continue to challenge today.

Even in 2022, in embracing the identity of artist and mother, there is the fear that our peers may see us as less than committed and in response to that, many end up compartmentalizing this identity as a way of protection, or worse, some give up their creative practice altogether—a reality which pushes practicing artist mothers even further to the fringe. Without a doubt, the additional hurdles that come with being a—BIPOC, disabled, queer, trans, single, or low-income—mother, even further steepen the barriers to pursuing one's artistic practice alongside one's motherhood.¹

Following the path of the artist mothers that have already explored this theme, there seems to be an ever-growing movement around motherhood and artistry in the public sphere. It is through this resourcefulness as mothers and as artists that many cohorts have been forming all across the country, and within all mediums, to address both the practical and emotional challenges faced as artist mothers. Though these groups originate as a tool of support, they often develop into friendships, creative collaborations, publications, and active organizing bodies. In fact, it is through this extended network, in the depths of this work, that Olivia De Prato and I became connected.

Our mutual friend and collaborator, the exceptionally talented composer, improviser, and mother Katherine Young, had put us in touch because of our respective artist mother-centered projects. De Prato is co-founder of Matricalis, a project and community hub that reflects on the impact of motherhood on individual musicians. Four likeminded musician mothers came together to reach out to a wide community of people, share resources, and build a broader support system. In Chicago, I host my own support circles called We, Family, which engage creative mothers of all practices, and am also affiliated with Extended Practice, which focuses on mothers in the visual arts, as well as Wild Yams, Black Mothers Artist Residency.

We strive to continue moving away from the identity of Mother, the monolith, to the more nuanced and complex versions of ourselves, and in these spaces we are able to shed some of these unrealistic expectations by putting up mirrors to each other. And while we often come together in these groups to address the lack, the incidental result is that we commune to celebrate each other and all the strengths and benefits of artist motherhood that can often go overlooked and underrecognized even by ourselves.

¹While this album and essay come out of our own personal experiences as mothers, we also recognize and celebrate the primary caretakers of all genders, identities, and lived experiences that share many of the same challenges (amongst others) that do not identify as mothers or as women.

Motherhood is an entry point. Motherhood is a lens through which to see each moment and relate to ourselves and the people around us. Motherhood is a creative act. And though as an artist mother this can at times necessitate a decision between activating one's artistic practice and one's parenting practice (when my child was first born, there were years when I thought my creativity had dried up and that I'd never make work again), if encouraged and fostered, this identity has the potential to deepen both practices significantly, to the benefit of the art, the family, and the self.

The power of both the mother and the artist to come up with creative solutions is unmistakable. If you ever have the chance to watch a person that you love deep in the act of mothering, their ability in real-time to meet obstacles, however small, with solutions will impress you. Artists, too, excel in meeting arising "problems"—material, theoretical, hypothetical, political—with innovative and thoughtful responses. One could even say that it is the basis of much contemporary art. So, in the intersection of this identity, **artist / mother**, this becomes an essential core trait, perhaps even an expertise, to be employed in both practices. And, in this context, we arrive at *I, A.M.—Artist Mother Project*.

In this album, De Prato offers an occasion for all to consider, or perhaps reconsider, that perennial question of whether one can be both an artist and a mother by inviting six outstanding composers to collaborate with her through the dual lens of artistry and motherhood. And through their compositions and in the lives of these composers, these thriving and talented artist mothers, we can answer a resounding *yes*, *we can be both*. Each who collaborated with De Prato on this project has committed to be a dedicated mother, while also still pursuing their goals and dreams in music and art. Even these liner notes were a welcome invitation for me to more deeply consider this identity. The composers, the cover artist, along with De Prato, Florence Price, Agnès Varda, Adrienne Rich, Alice Neel, Audre Lorde, (to name just a few artist mothers who came before us) are a testament that it is possible.

The compositions that make up *I*, *A.M.*—*Artist Mother Project* are explorations and reflections on philosophical, practical, and technical inquiries that arise as artist mothers. How do we find time for our artistic practices as parents? How do we find time for ourselves? What connects us in an ever more isolated world? How do we stay connected to fellow mothers? How do we collaborate across the world? How do we collaborate in the pandemic? What does it look like to engage the family in artmaking? In what ways does my process change in this new identity?

Much like the motherhood they grow out of, the compositions straddle inconsistencies: the tender and the unnerving, the facile and the tense, the dreamy and the difficult. The pieces are thoughtful and pleasurable to listen to and engage with, and certainly do not need the context provided here to be enjoyed. While looking through the text from each composer about how they arrived at the piece, and what they were thinking about, it is exciting to see the varying degrees to which motherhood thematically enters the mind of the composer and the work. There is no one way to be a mother, just as there is no one way to be an artist.

The album begins with **Natacha Diels**'s *automatic writing mumbles of the late bour* (2020), the title inspired by Robert Ashley. Diels writes:

Passing the time,
Perpetual motion,
Extremes on some spectrum.
Beautiful noise, involuntary elegance
Automatic writing mumbles for the late hour

The piece was created by recording De Prato's violin sounds that would trigger electronic sounds. Then Diels, who considers herself a collage artist, took the material they recorded together and transformed it to suit the composition she had imagined, "[...] regularity interrupted by strained attempts at creating a solid form, regularly petering out to nothing before returning with renewed energy, culminating in a gradual move towards absurd funk."

The biological processes of mycorrhizal networks—the (inter)connection and collaboration (in all its multifarious complexities)—inspire the creative practice behind **Katherine Young**'s *Mycorrhiza* series and make their way differently into each piece. This particular iteration of *Mycorrhiza* I (2021) is based on recordings made by Young and De Prato in the scarce time they had to themselves as mothers at the beginning of the pandemic—the time they each had to do nothing. In the piece, De Prato responds to and imitates the sounds from these recordings, the resulting music revealing the underlying busyness of even our quiet time. The title pairs with the sharp, sometimes even frantic, violin sounds to evoke imagined visions of the nearly imperceptible mycorrhizal networks working vigorously underground.

may you dream of rainbows in magical lands (2021) creates a meditative bath of sound in its calming long tones. **Ha Yang Kim** said of her compositions in a recent interview, "I'm much more interested and focused on the relationship with time, space, and the actual sonic and timbral material of whatever I'm working with, rather than building a narrative in composing or improvising which I think was more a part of my previous composition work especially. [...] I'm much more excited about just working with the raw elements of the materials itself, such as time and duration, the perception of spaces, tunings, playing with frequencies in regards to feedback, amplification, and resonance." This piece, which was written in Kraig Grady "Centaur" just intonation on the fundamental 174 Hz, aims to create some sort of illusion of time, with notes manipulated to be prolonged to an unnatural length. This commission is inspired by the deep, beautiful bond between mother and child, and you can hear De Prato's son featured on subtle percussion on found objects. As the title suggests, we are invited into an invented textural dream state.

In *noch unbenannt* (2021), which translates to *still unknown*, improviser and renowned theremin player **Pamelia Stickney** reflects on the feelings of motherhood. The haunting opening of theremin and violin are voices in ethereal duet

Fire in the Dark (2020) is inspired by Olivia De Prato's idea that she and composer **Jen Baker** could envision unique ways of collaborating, with a longer timeline built in to facilitate their parental duties. The piece originates in a meditation from winter solstice 2020, and the warmth, reassurance, and hope that experience provided Baker on that cold December morning in the pandemic in New York City. The piece begins with the violin in almost flute-like whispers and fluctuates between that and strong singing long tones. With these sounds keeping us focused so intently, the piece is surely meditative.

The closing piece, *The Dream Feed*, is collaborative in nature, and created jointly between Vienna and New York in the pandemic. **Zosha Di Castri**, who is also a founding member of Matricalis, is founder of podcast/duo project (by the same name as the piece) *The Dream Feed: Musicians on Motherhood*, which interrogates the seemingly incompatible worlds of professional music and motherhood. This particular piece, which is part of a larger series by Di Castri, is inspired by field recordings she made from the time when she was pregnant and a new mom and can be performed differently each time it's presented. This version truly takes you on a journey through its many moods and sounds. The violin and piano here create a palpable narrative of emotions. It is intimate, expressive, and cathartic. Di Castri adds, "The electronics are at once abstract and referential to the experience of motherhood, including sounds of sonograms, nods to the passing of time, and the whimpers of sleeping babies."

It is interesting to note, perhaps an unintended theme, that all of the compositions on the album have some reference to night or darkness in the title (implied in Young's piece, as mycorrhizal networks reside underground, concealed by the dirt in darkness). As an artist mother, this is not surprising—oftentimes night or nap time can be some of the few moments of uninterrupted time during the day

²Ray, Roxanne, "Cellist Ha-Yang Kim blends the discipline of art and creating music with humanitarianism, social justice and creating a more just world," *International Examiner*, October 18th, 2020.

to work (or to yourself), and a few composers on the album allude to this in their piece. Alternatively, this shows Motherhood in themes of that which is hidden and that which gets revealed.

In an interview with Zosha Di Castri on her podcast, De Prato is quoted saying "Becoming a parent is a life-changing experience, a constant rollercoaster of emotions. Parenthood is learning to adapt, opening yourself up to learning new things, seeing new perspectives, and watching and encouraging a new person to grow and explore the world. This practice is in reality deeply aligned with making art. One takes what comes moment to moment."

While this album certainly stands on its own as a compelling collection of contemporary compositions, it is also so important that an artist like De Prato, who is making discoveries through her own journey of motherhood, is curating and continuing to make a platform for others. The compositions on the album and the context in which they are presented bring to the forefront the nuances that we all must consider to continue to break down the ideas of Motherhood and of Artistic practice that do not serve us.

I, A.M.—Artist Mother Project is an invitation to consider our own biases of what a Mother is and can be, as well as what an Artist is and can do, and asks us to expand our ideas of both.

—A.Martinez

A.Martinez is a mother, poet, visual artist, organizer, and arts administrator living in Chicago. You can learn more about her artistic practice and work at alyssabydemartinez.com.

COMPOSER NOTES

Jen Baker

Fire in the Dark

Inspired by Olivia de Prato's idea that we could envision unique ways of collaborating, with a longer timeline built in to facilitate our parental duties, I began with a meditation to honor the sun on the winter solstice of 2020. Deep into the pandemic, it felt especially reassuring that the sun came out to shine on a cold

December day in New York City, and I recorded my first material for *Fire in the Dark* while in this meditation. Using the warmth of sun on my face, the brightness hitting my closed eyes, I recorded a spoken/sung improvisation, in acknowledgment of our collective moment in time, as well as creating this kernel of bedrock for *Fire in the Dark*, named for this initial experience. Just as I finished the improvisation, the sun went behind thick clouds, where it remained for the rest of the day. Later, Olivia and I found ways of adapting the vocal material into violin sounds, through occasional in-person meet-ups, virtual, and ping-ponging recorded versions back and forth.

Olivia De Prato & Zosha Di Castri

The Dream Feed I

This duo was jointly created at a distance during the pandemic between Vienna and New York, as a means to reflect on our experiences as artist-mothers. The process began with Di Castri composing an electronic track, over which she asked De Prato to record an improvisation. Olivia sent back two tracks, which Zosha edited together around the electronics. The final step involved Zosha improvising at the piano in response to Olivia's music, all edited together into the collaborative composition presented here. The music is by turns intimate, expressive, and cathartic, connecting us across the separation of this particular moment. The electronics are at once abstract and referential to the experience of motherhood, including sounds of sonograms, nods to the passing of time, and the whimpers of sleeping babies. It is our hope that this piece, whether presented in recorded format or live, will start new conversations in our milieu and will question the still present "taboo" that women believe they must choose between family and career. We hope this music stands as proof that though having a child alters one's life irreversibly, it can also be a profoundly creative experience, encouraging new ways of thinking and doing.

Ha-Yang Kim

"may you dream of rainbows in magical lands" was written for Olivia and her son to play and make sounds together as this commission is inspired by the deep, beautiful bond between mother and child. I wanted to include Olivia's son in the creation of the piece, to bring the ambient sounds of found objects such as Lego toys and glass bottles into the atmosphere of a dreamy sound world of layered violin tones floating in textural sonic environments. The piece is composed in Kraig Grady "Centaur" just intonation on the fundamental 174 Hz. Using multiple layers of single violin tones to create shifting chords that float pulselessly, the piece evokes a slow dreamy sound world moving amongst imaginary textural landscapes created by improvisational play with found objects by her young son. This piece is written for Olivia and dedicated to my young daughter who inspired me with her own dreams of magical lands filled with rainbows.

Pamelia Stickney noch unbenannt

it begins with a theremin solo line that becomes looped, laying out a harmonic foundation that becomes kaleidoscopic when filtered through a harmonizer as the violin, like an observing eye, enters to take a peek around. maybe the solo violin is like the thoughts of the observer as they pull away for a moment from the view hole to then return for another peek while then banging and shaking the kaleidoscope, eventually popping out of the eye socket to ride along with all the swirling color chunks, having nothing left to hold onto and freaking out until it sees everything in a dizzying slow motion as they come to rest—like, finally, the baby has fallen asleep but i'm too exhausted to do whatever it was i thought i would set out to do while he was sleeping!

Katherine Young *Mycorrbiza I*

Part of an in-progress series of pieces for solo performers, ensemble, electronics, dance, and video, *Mycorrbiza I: With Olivia (Stolen Moments)* developed in deep and extended collaboration with violinist Olivia De Prato. Mycorrhizae are vast subterranean networks that act like "fungal bridges between the individual trees" (Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*), "More than ninety percent of plants

depend on mycorrhizal fungi—from the Greek words for fungus (*mykes*) and root (*rhiza*)—which can link trees in shared networks" (Merlin Sheldrake, *Entangled Life*). These networks form utilizing anarchic fungal architectural processes, known as mycelium, "the most common of fungal habits, better thought of not as a thing but as a process: an exploratory, irregular tendency" (Sheldrake). These biological processes of (inter)connection and collaboration (in all its multifarious complexities) inspire the creative practice behind *Mycorrbiza* and make their way differently into each piece in the series.

Initiated by De Prato for her *I, A.M.—Artist Mother* commissioning project, *Mycorrbiza I* grapples with the difficulties caregivers can have in finding the unstructured time and expansive mental space required for creativity. During the pandemic—with schools closed and families isolated at home—these precious moments of time to do nothing . . . alone became even more difficult to find. For these reasons, I wanted the process of making the piece—as well as the experience of performing the piece—to be a structure through which Olivia and I could make this time for ourselves. We each recorded such stolen or carefully carved moments—moments when we weren't trying to be productive, when we weren't working or caring for anyone else. We then used the recordings of these walks, private moments behind locked doors, and moments of meditation as raw materials for building both the instrumental vocabulary and electronics for the piece.

Internationally recognized as a soloist as well as a chamber musician, Austro-Italian violinist **Olivia De Prato** (b. 1983) established herself as a passionate performer of contemporary and improvised music, breaking boundaries of the traditional violin repertoire, and regularly performs in Europe, South America, China, and the United States. De Prato is the co-founder and first violinist of the Mivos Quartet, which focuses on the performance of contemporary string quartets. She was awarded the Ursula and Dwight Mamlok Prize for the interpretation of contemporary music in 2019. She has recorded for such record labels as Harmonia Mundi, Bluenote, Deutsche

Grammophon, Kairos, Nonesuch, Tzadik, and Cantaloupe. Her debut solo album *Streya* was released on New Focus recordings in 2018. www.oliviadeprato.com

New York City-based trombonist/composer **Jen Baker** (b. 1976) has pioneered a widely diverse career based in redefining the role of the trombone in contemporary music and traditional performance settings. Featured on numerous record labels, including the soundtrack to Werner Herzog's Oscar-nominated *Encounters at the End of the World*, she performs locally and internationally as a contemporary trombonist and improviser. Her book, *Hooked on Multiphonics*, fills the gap for trombonists and composers looking to understand this extended technique for her instrument. She has recently performed with Bang on a Can All Stars for the People's Commissioning Fund, Denardo Coleman in the Long Play Festival, Carnegie Hall's Citywide, Argento, Sarah Weaver's chamber ensemble, Gelsey Bell's Music in the Catacombs, Fay Victor, and with the Anna Webber/Angela Morris Big Band. This season has also seen premieres of three solo pieces (flute, trumpet, violin); a brass quartet, *Eco Nox*; a trombone quartet, *Hibiscus Quartitudes*; and the long awaited (pre-pandemic!) *Far from the Future* for Wavefield Ensemble.

Zosha Di Castri (b. 1985) is a Canadian composer/pianist living in New York. Her work (which has been performed in Canada, the United States, South America, Asia, and Europe) extends beyond purely concert music, including projects with electronics, sound art, and collaborations with video and dance. She has worked with such ensembles as the BBC Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the National Arts Centre Orchestra, the L.A. Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, ICE, Wet Ink, Ekmeles, JACK Quartet, Yarn/Wire, the NEM, and Talea Ensemble, among others. Di Castri is currently the Francis Goelet Assistant Professor of Music at Columbia University and a 2021 Guggenheim fellow.

Natacha Diels' (b. 1981) work focuses on collage, magic of the virtual, and the ritual of life as art. She combines choreographed movement, video animation, instrumental practice, and cynical play to create worlds of curiosity and unease.

Recent and upcoming work includes *Papillon and the Dancing Cranes*, for construction cranes and giant butterfly; *Watching other people's movies through the plane seats*, a solo performance project; and *Beautiful Trouble*, an ongoing six-part TV-style miniseries with the JACK Quartet. Diels is a founding member of the composer/performer collective Ensemble Pamplemousse. She teaches at the University of Pennsylvania. http://natachadiels.com

Composer and cellist **Ha-Yang Kim** (b. 1976) collaborates with artists and ensembles in festivals and venues throughout the world. Kim's work is inspired by acoustic phenomena, ritual ceremonial processes, and characterized by an organic visceral lyricism of sound influenced by the East Asian sense of space and emptiness. She has released two albums on Tzadik Records: *Ama* (2007), and *Threadsuns* for string quartet (2014), performed by JACK Quartet. Her music has also been performed by the Seattle Modern Orchestra, members of ICE, violist Nadia Sirota, and vocalist Hanna-Maria Strand. She is currently on the music faculty at the Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle, WA.

Born in Los Angeles, the Vienna-based composer and multi-instrumentalist **Pamelia Stickney** (b. 1976) first made a name for herself as a jazz double-bass player with Arthur Blythe. In 1997, she discovered one of the oldest electronic instruments, the theremin. Today, she is one of the few recognized virtuosos on this instrument worldwide. She tours nationally and internationally as a soloist, with her Vienna-based trio Blueblut, as well as in collaboration with a variety of artists in the realms of jazz/improvisation, classical, contemporary, black metal, and hard-to-describe weird stuff!

http://pamelia.weebly.com

Katherine Young's (b. 1980) electroacoustic music uses expressive noises, curious timbres, and kinetic structures. The Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra's MusicNOW, Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt, Third Coast Percussion, the University of Chicago's Smart Museum of Art, and others have commissioned her music and installations. She has worked closely with such performers as Wet Ink, Ensemble Nikel, WasteLAnd, Yarn/Wire, and her mentor

Anthony Braxton. As a bassoonist and improviser, Young amplifies her instrument and employs a flexible electronics setup. She has documented her work on numerous recordings. She teaches at Emory University in Atlanta. https://katherineyoung.info

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Olivia De Prato

Streya. New Focus Recordings fcr193.

Jen Baker

Concrete & Void. New Focus Recordings fcr304.

Zosha Di Castri

Life Reflected. Analekta AN 2 8870. Tachitipo. New Focus Recordings fcr227.

Natacha Diels

RAANNA JEDAKU. Carrier Records 013. ... This Is the Uplifting Part. Parlour Tapes+ 011.

Ha-Yang Kim

Ama. Tzadik Records TZ8037.

Threadsuns. Tzadik Records TZ9008.

Pamelia Stickney

Butt Butt (with Blueblut). Plag Dich Nicht PDN30. Thinking Out Loud. Tzadik Records TZ7717.

Katherine Young

Beautifulish. Shinkoyo 040.

Diligence Is to Magic as Progress Is to Flight. Parlour Tapes+ 004. The Surveyors, Architeuthis Walks on Land. Carrier Records 027.

Producers: Olivia De Prato and Martin Klebahn (4tune audio) Engineers: Martin Klebahn, Christoph Janka (Track 5) automatic writing mumbles of the late hour: September 9, 2021, Brooklyn, NY Mycorrhiza I: February 1, 2022, Vienna, Austria

may you dream of rainbows in magical lands: November 4, 2021, Vienna noch unbenannt: April 21, 2021, Vienna

Fire in the Dark: September 3, 2021, Vienna

The Dream Feed: December 9, 2020, Vienna

Digital mastering: Paul Zinman, SoundByte Productions Inc., NYC

Cover art: Meghan Hildebrand, "Never Alone Together," acrylic on canvas, 36" x 36"— http://meghanhildebrand.com

Design: Bob Defrin Design, Inc.

All works are published by the composers.

Acknowledgments:

This project was made possible by the New Music USA Project Grant.

This album is inspired and dedicated to my son Leandro.

Special thanks to my husband, Victor Lowrie, and my parents, Verena and Gianni De Prato, for their support, love, and inspiration.

FOR NEW WORLD RECORDS: Lisa Kahlden, President; Paul M. Tai, Vice-President, Director of Artists and Repertory; Sam Weinberg, Production Associate.

ANTHOLOGY OF RECORDED MUSIC, INC., BOARD OF TRUSTEES: Amy Beal, Thomas Teige Carroll, Robert Clarida, Emanuel Gerard, Lisa Kahlden, Herman Krawitz, Fred Lerdahl, Larry Polansky, Paul M. Tai.

Francis Goelet (1926-1998), In Memoriam

For a complete catalog, including liner notes, visit our Web site: www.newworldrecords.org.

New World Records, 304 Water Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201

Tel (212) 290-1680 E-mail: info@newworldrecords.org

(P) & © 2022 Anthology of Recorded Music, Inc. All rights reserved. Made in U.S.A.

ARTIST MOTHER PROJECT • OLIVIA DE PRATO, VIOLIN

80838-2

I. A.M. 80838-2

ARTIST MOTHER PROJECT NEW WORKS FOR VIOLIN AND ÉLECTRONICS

OLIVIA DE PRATO, VIOLIN



- 1. Natacha Diels (b. 1981) automatic writing mumbles of the late hour (2020) 5:28
 - 2. Katherine Young (b. 1980) Mycorrhiza I (2021) 11:23
- 3. Ha-Yang Kim (b. 1976) may you dream of rainbows in magical lands (2021) 14:04
 - 4. Pamelia Stickney (b. 1976) noch unbenannt (2021) with Pamelia Stickney, theremin
 - 5. Jen Baker (b. 1976) Fire in the Dark (2020) 8.07
 - 6. Zosha Di Castri (b. 1985) The Dream Feed (2020) 10:51 with Zosha Di Castri, piano

TT: 57:22



New World Records, 304 Water Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201 Tel (212) 290-1680 Fax (646) 224-9638 info@newworldrecords.org www.newworldrecords.org