

Bio information: **CHAD TAYLOR TRIO** [featuring **Brian Settles & Neil Podgurski**]

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The Chad Taylor Trio's *The Daily Biological* takes the protean and prolific drummer/composer into stimulating new territory with saxophonist Brian Settles and pianist Neil Podgurski.

Keeping track of the protean and prolific drummer **Chad Taylor** is no easy feat. With each album and project he extends an already creatively roiling conversation or introduces a fertile new communion. As the debut recording of an ensemble rooted in deep and abiding friendships *The Daily Biological* belongs to the latter category. Featuring saxophonist Brian Settles and pianist Neil Podgurski, the unusual trio creates tough and engaging music that unfurls in kinetic conversational bursts. The sturdy but unadorned structures invite improvisation while offering a rich matrix of coordinates for exploration. *The Daily Biological* presents a new perspective on Taylor as a bandleader with a keen ear for striking collaborations.

It's hard to overstate Taylor's contributions to improvised music over the past three decades. A composer, scholar and educator as well as a capaciously inventive percussionist now living in Philadelphia, Taylor is probably best known as co-founder of the Chicago Underground Duo with trumpeter Rob Mazurek (and the numerous Underground iterations that have spun off of that original partnership). A professional on the Chicago scene from the age of 16, he became a rhythmic muse for many of the most celebrated artists in improvised music, including Fred Anderson, Pharoah Sanders, Nicole Mitchell, Matana Roberts, Ken Vandermark, Darius Jones, James Brandon Lewis, Jaimie Branch, Derek Bailey, Marc Ribot, and Peter Brötzmann. He's also led numerous acclaimed ensembles of his own, though never a trio quite like the one documented on *The Daily Biological*.

The album opens with "The Shepherd," an episodic piece by Settles that weaves together disparate sections with its own intuitive logic. From the swaggering, staggering opening section through Taylor's beautifully calibrated solo and the piano/tenor sax unison outro, it's never quite clear who's leading the flock. In many ways the piece establishes the trio's strategic approach to musical problem solving within a wide-open harmonic palette untethered by a low-end anchor.

Harmonic twists abound in Podgurski's "Prism," a tune that calls to mind the Caribbean-inflected bebop of Elmo Hope. The pianist's moody "Resistance" takes a different tact, with a repeating, almost through-composed melody that builds tension without easy resolution.

"It might sound like Neil is improvising but all the intricate stuff he's playing is part of the composition," Taylor says. "It's almost like a classical piece. That's something that's unique about this trio, we all have strong backgrounds in classical music. When I first went to music school I was a classical guitar student. Both Neil and Brian actively work on classical repertoire."

Taylor's "Matape" finds another avenue where stubborn repetition leads to revelation. He's performed and recorded the piece in a duo with James Brandon Lewis, but here the tune plays out like a sly game of hide and seek. Podgurski's "Birds Leaves Wind Trees" is one of the album's most mysterious pieces, a picaresque adventure on which the pianist sits out for long stretches until taking charge for the calypso-inflected conclusion. "Recife" is a tune that Taylor wrote with Geri Allen in mind, inspired by her artful laying of lines balancing polyrhythmic motion. The album closes with Taylor's "Regression," an extended piece that opens in *Interstellar Space* territory and ends like a Chopin etude, with numerous twists and turns along the way. It's a satisfying conclusion to a set of music that steadily resists settling into predictable patterns.

Part of the reason the music feels so lived in is that Taylor traces his friendships with Settles and Podgurski back to their mid-1990s undergrad years in the New School. While many of his peers hunkered down with like-minded musicians besotted with a particular jazz idiom, "I've always floated between different scenes," Taylor says. "I didn't find many people like that. Brian was one of them. We became really good friends and I'd go with him to DC to hang with his family on breaks."

They started a quartet called The Life Ensemble with bassist Tom Abbs and pianist Andrew Bemkey. The group performed regularly and Neil Podgurski came out to so many of the gigs that Taylor started to notice. They became acquainted when he walked by a New School practice room and caught Podgurski working on an Andrew Hill tune "which you just didn't hear very often at that time," Taylor says.

Upon graduation, the three friends went their separate ways. Settles moved back to Washington D.C., and Podgurski settled in Philly. Years later, Taylor ran into Podgurski “and he gave me a demo of his original music based on Buddhist texts, *Nine Times One Hundred Thousand*,” Taylor says. “It was one of the best piano trio recordings I’ve heard. It completely blew me away.”

Determined to start playing together again they recruited Settles and set out creating a body of music for a specific grant. When the grant didn’t come through, Taylor felt so strongly about the budding ensemble that he spearheaded the quest for gigs and recording opportunities. It’s not the only adventurous bass-less piano-drums-sax trio on the scene. Prominent examples include Fieldwork with Vijay Iyer, Steve Lehman and Tyshawn Sorey and Paradoxical Frog with Sorey, Kris Davis and Ingrid Laubrock, “but the truth is I haven’t checked that music out much,” Taylor says. “I wanted to come at it from a unique place.”

The absence of a bass means all three players sometimes step into the low-end role. A musical problem to be solved “we all approached it differently,” Taylor says. “All of our tunes explore different ways to utilize a trio without a bass. You need to be really strong in your playing. I think that’s one of the things about this trio, we try to be very independent of each other. We’re all sort of playing in our own time feel.”

Deeply embedded in the New York/Philly jazz scene for some three decades, Podgurski has performed widely with masters such as Nicholas Payton, Eric Alexander and Orrin Evans. A devoted practitioner of Tibet’s ancient Bön-Buddhist meditation tradition, he drew on these sacred texts for his acclaimed 2014 album *Nine Times One Hundred Thousand* (Cleanhead Records).

Settles performs regularly with some of modern jazz’s leading groups, including Tomas Fujiwara and The Hook Up, Michael Formanek’s Cheating Heart and Big Band Kolossus, and bands led by Jonathan Finlayson. A protégé of Stanley Turrentine’s, he released two albums as a leader focusing on his buoyant, pithy compositions. On 2011’s award-winning *Secret Handshake* (Engine) he featured the quintet Central Union, and followed up with 2013’s trio album *Folk* (Engine).

Born in 1973 in Tempe, Arizona, Taylor grew up in Chicago and was shaped by the city’s wide open improvisational ethic. He earned a BFA in jazz performance from the New School and an MFA from Rutgers University in jazz research and history. He’s forged deep creative alliances with a dazzling array of artists, including guitarist Jeff Parker, multi-instrumentalist Cooper-Moore, bassist Tom Abbs, saxophonist Avram Fefer, guitarist Marc Ribot, and bassist Eric Revis. He doesn’t have many releases under his own name since Taylor has tended to work in co-led or collective situations, but his compositions have been featured on dozens of albums.

“I’ve always been a fan of Joe Chambers, and studied with him at the New School,” Taylor says. “He always had some tunes on those great Blue Note records. That’s what I started doing early on. In all the different bands I started saying I’ve got a tune. The people I’ve worked with were always interested.”

It’s hardly news that Taylor is one of jazz’s most dependably inspired drummers. *The Daily Biological* should turn many more ears onto his vivid imagination as a composer, opening a new window into his expansive musical vision.

PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS

Digital [High-Resolution] images available at <http://www.cuneiformrecords.com/bandshtml/chadtaylor.html>

