

Cedille Records  
1205 W. Balmoral Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60640  
(773) 989-2515  
www.cedillerecords.org

Press contact: Nat Silverman  
Nathan J. Silverman Co. /PR  
1830 Sherman Ave., Suite 401  
Evanston, IL 60201-3774  
Phone (847) 328-4292  
Fax (847) 328-4317  
Email: natsilv@aol.com

# News

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CD release date: June 28, 2011

## Pulitzer Prize-Winning Works Receive World-Premiere Recordings

### Carlos Kalmar Conducts Grant Park Orchestra and Chorus in William Schuman's 'A Free Song' and Leo Sowerby's 'The Canticle of the Sun' on new CD

*Album includes Copland's 'Appalachian Spring' suite*

World-premiere recordings of two epic-sized Pulitzer Prize-winning works from the 1940s are heard on a new Cedille Records CD with Carlos Kalmar conducting Chicago's Grant Park Orchestra and Chorus.

*The Pulitzer Project*, available June 28, offers first-ever recordings of William Schuman's secular cantata *A Free Song* for chorus and orchestra, winner of the inaugural 1943 Pulitzer Prize in music, and Leo Sowerby's *The Canticle of the Sun* for chorus and orchestra, winner of the 1946 Pulitzer Prize. Also on the album is Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring* orchestral suite, which Copland arranged from his original ballet score that earned the 1945 Pulitzer (Cedille Records CDR 90000 125).

This is Cedille's seventh recording with maestro Kalmar and the Grant Park Orchestra. The CD marks the commercial recording debut of the Grant Park Chorus (Christopher Bell, chorus director).

*The Pulitzer Project* — Kalmar's brainchild — was the title of the orchestra's identically programmed June 25–26, 2010, concerts. These took place indoors at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance in Millennium Park, Chicago, where the CD was recorded live.

The *Chicago Tribune*'s review of the first night's performance began, "All concerts of American music should be as fresh."

The venerable Grant Park Orchestra, resident ensemble of the municipally funded Grant Park Music Festival, has always presented enterprising programs of American music. Kalmar, a native of Uruguay, has deepened that commitment during his nearly 11 years as principal conductor.

James Ginsburg, Cedille Records president, says, "The Pulitzer Project concerts offered audiences a unique opportunity to hear three of the first four prize-winning works, including the strangely neglected Schuman and Sowerby pieces, side-by-side in a single evening. With this new CD, maestro Kalmar and the Grant Park Orchestra and Chorus can now share that singular experience with the world."

The CD was produced by Ginsburg and engineered by Eric Arunas and Bill Maylone.

Schuman's *A Free Song* uses excerpts from Walt Whitman's *Drum Taps*, a poetic record of his humanitarian visits to Washington, D.C.'s Civil War hospitals. Schuman (1910–1992) set Whitman's vigorous, expansive verse to a fierce and concentrated musical style. The two-movement work, written during World War II, employs contrasting poetic passages that "embody Whitman's belief in America's fundamental strength and optimism in time of great strife," writes Richard E. Rodda in the CD notes. In a review of the Grant Park Orchestra's concert performance, the *Chicago Tribune* observed, "Kalmar's account [of *A Free Song*] was, by turns, poignant and electric."

A lifelong New Yorker and musician of many talents, Schuman received the first New York Music Critics' Circle Award in 1942 and was the recipient of 27 honorary degrees, two Guggenheim Fellowships, the gold medal from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Pulitzer Prize Special Citation, a George Peabody Medal, and many other recognitions. Among

the champions of his music were Aaron Copland and conductors Serge Koussevitzky and Leonard Bernstein.

One of the most recognizable and beloved American orchestral works, Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring* suite began life as a ballet score for the Martha Graham Dance Company. The original ballet was written for a 13-piece chamber orchestra. Of Copland's (1900–1990) various *Appalachian Spring* arrangements, the orchestral suite heard on *The Pulitzer Project* is the work's most familiar incarnation. The suite's eight sections, played without interruption, depict springtime scenes of a newlywed pioneer couple, their new farmhouse, and their neighbors in rural Pennsylvania of the early 19th century. A favorite of many listeners is the work's five variations on the Shaker tune "Simple Gifts." "What a pleasure to hear such taut and tightly focused performances of this familiar music," *Chicago Classical Review*'s Lawrence Johnson wrote in a concert review.

Sowerby's *The Canticle of the Sun* is based on St. Francis of Assisi's 13<sup>th</sup>-century hymn praising God and his creations. Sowerby (1895–1968) was attracted to the text because of its opportunities for musical color. The program annotator for the *Canticle*'s 1945 world premiere at Carnegie Hall wrote, "He has made of it a panorama of all the elements of heaven and earth . . . it unfolds in a series of tonal pictures, each motivated by the phase it describes." *Chicago Classical Review* reported, "Under Kalmar's firm, incisive direction, the *Canticle* opens with impassioned sweep in the orchestra." The work "shows Sowerby's confident handling of orchestra and voices, often drawing a striking organ-like sonority from the instrumental choirs."

A native of Grand Rapids, Mich., Sowerby spent most of his career in Chicago as a church musician and composition teacher. He served as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's de facto composer-in-residence for 30 years under longtime CSO conductor Frederick Stock. The recipient of the first Rome Prize in 1921, Sowerby was the first American to be made a Fellow of

London's Royal School of Church Music and was the founding director of the College of Church Musicians at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.

Among the audience members at the *Canticle*'s premiere was the young composer Samuel Barber. He later penned a tribute to his older colleague: "Dammit, Leo. I wish I could write for chorus like you!"

*The Pulitzer Project* is made possible in part by a grant from The Aaron Copland Fund for Music. The recording of Sowerby's *Canticle* was additionally supported by a grant from the Leo Sowerby Foundation.

### **The Artists**

Founded in 1943, the Grant Park Orchestra is the resident orchestra of Chicago's Grant Park Music Festival. Among its conductors have been Leonard Slatkin, David Zinman, Zdenek Macal, and Hugh Wolff. The orchestra comprises musicians from the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Metropolitan Opera, Buffalo Philharmonic, Pittsburgh and Seattle Symphony Orchestras, other major orchestras, and top-tier Chicago freelancers. Since 2000, its principal conductor has been Carlos Kalmar, who is also music director of the Oregon Symphony. In 2011, Kalmar was awarded the additional title of artistic director of the Grant Park festival.

The Grant Park Chorus, directed by Christopher Bell, is a fully professional ensemble. It comprises singers from the Lyric Opera of Chicago and Chicago Symphony Choruses, the William Ferris Chorale, Chicago a cappella, and other ensembles, as well as many singers with substantial solo careers.

### **Cedille Records**

Grammy award-winning Cedille Records (pronounced say-DEE) has been dedicated to showcasing the most noteworthy classical artists in and from the Chicago area since its launch in late 1989.

In May 2011, audiophile-oriented Cedille began offering better-than-CD-quality 24-bit music downloads in the “lossless” FLAC format, available directly via its website, <http://www.cedillerecords.org>. The label introduced its CD-quality 16-bit FLAC downloads in the summer of 2010. Cedille albums are also available via the label’s website as physical CDs and extra-high-quality (256 kbps) MP3 file downloads.

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***The Pulitzer Project***  
**(Cedille Records CDR 90000 125)**

**William Schuman: *A Free Song* (13:41)**  
**Aaron Copland: *Appalachian Spring* (27:40)**  
**Leo Sowerby: *The Canticle of the Sun* (32:18)**

**Grant Park Orchestra and Chorus**  
**Carlos Kalmar, conductor**  
**Christopher Bell, chorus director**