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# News

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## Avalon String Quartet Makes Cedille Label Debut With Luminous Works by Debussy, Britten, Garrop, and Golijov

'Illuminations' CD includes world-premiere recording  
of American Stacy Garrop's Quartet No. 4,  
a set of musical reflections  
on medieval illustrations

The Chicago-based Avalon String Quartet makes its Cedille Records debut with *Illuminations*, an eclectic program of works by Claude Debussy, Benjamin Britten, Stacy Garrop, and Oswaldo Golijov that illustrates a swath of the veteran, award-winning ensemble's diverse repertoire.

The album takes its name from contemporary American composer Stacy Garrop's String Quartet No. 4: "Illuminations," which receives its world-premiere recording on the CD. The artists feel the title also "encapsulates the other works on the program": Debussy's String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10; Britten's *Three Divertimenti* and *Alla marcia*; and Golijov's *Tenebrae*.

*Illuminations* will be released August 11 on CD and as a digital download (Cedille Records CDR 90000 156).

### 'Brilliance and Fun'

Debussy's String Quartet in G minor (1893), which unfolds through iridescent quasi-orchestral textures, is a signature piece for the Avalon String Quartet. "It's one of our favorite pieces and one that we've performed the most," said ensemble violist Tony Devroye in an

interview with Cedille Records. “It’s full of life and brilliance and fun. And it feels new every time you play it,” he said.

The Avalon gravitates to unfamiliar works by well-known composers. Britten’s youthful, energetic *Three Divertimenti* (1933, rev.1936) and *Alla marcia* (1933), radiating an inventive and exuberant allure, were originally conceived as character portraits of Britten’s childhood friends. Devroye says they’re among “the rare, stand-alone works in the string quartet repertoire that make an impact.” Given the new album’s title, it’s notable that Britten reused material from *Alla marcia* in his orchestral song cycle *Les Illuminations*.

Garrop’s String Quartet No. 4: “Illuminations,” from 2011, is a *Pictures at an Exhibition*-style tour of illustrations from an ornate medieval manuscript. The work depicts five illuminated pages from an early 15<sup>th</sup>-century prayer book, “The Hours Catherine of Cleves,” from the collection of the Morgan Library and Museum in New York. According to liner notes about the piece by Garrop and Susan Yasillo, “As in Mussorgsky’s work, the audience follows the reader as he or she opens the book, studies and reflects on the five illuminations, and then closes the book at the end of prayer.”

The Avalon has been performing Garrop’s “Illuminations” quartet for several years, and it’s been a crowd pleaser, Devroye said. “Audiences respond to the narrative arc of the piece.”

Garrop’s music has been performed by the choir Chanticleer; the Detroit Symphony, Grant Park, and Minnesota Orchestras; and the Biava Quartet, Lincoln Trio, and International Contemporary Ensemble, among other groups.

Golijov’s lyrical, deeply moving *Tenebrae* (Latin for “darkness”), written in 2000 for the Kronos Quartet, pays tender tribute to the earth, depicted in its remote celestial beauty, haunted by undertones of human discord. The composer writes, “The compositional challenge was to write music that would sound as an orbiting spaceship that never touches ground.” The title refers to solemn Holy Week services in the Catholic Church. Golijov draws on materials as

diverse as Middle Eastern sounds and French Baroque composer Francois Couperin's settings of biblical lamentations. The score for this unusual work directs the second violinist to tune her instrument's G-string down a third, darkening the sound of the quartet. The Avalon's Devroye calls *Tenebrae* "a very beautiful work that we've programmed to good effect" in concert.

### **Avalon String Quartet**

The Avalon String Quartet's recording credits include a critically acclaimed 2010 CD of contemporary American works on the Albany label. Its debut CD, *Dawn to Dusk*, on Channel Classics, was honored with a Chamber Music America/WQXR Record Award.

The Avalon is quartet-in-residence at the Northern Illinois University School of Music, a position formerly held by the distinguished Vermeer Quartet. The *Chicago Tribune* calls the Avalon "an ensemble that invites you — ears, mind, and spirit — into its music."

"A remarkably fine ensemble" (*The Strad*), the quartet captured top prize at the ARD Competition in Munich (2000) as well as first prize at the Concert Artists Guild Competition in New York (1999).

Quartet members are Blaise Magniere, violin; Marie Wang, violin; Anthony Devroye, viola; and Cheng-Hou Lee, cello.

### **Recording Dates and Venue**

*Illuminations* was produced by James Ginsburg and engineered by Bill Maylone at sessions December 15–18, 2014, at the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts at the University of Chicago, Chicago, Ill.

### **Cedille Records**

Marking its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary during the 2014–2015 season, 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 debut in November 1989.

The audiophile-oriented label releases every new album in multiple formats: a physical

CD; a 96 kHz, 24-bit, studio-quality FLAC download; and a 320 Kbps MP3 download.

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***Illuminations***  
**(Cedille Records CDR 90000 156)**

Claude Debussy: String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10 (25:12)  
Benjamin Britten: *Three Divertimenti* (10:17); *Alla marcia* (3:19)  
Stacy Garrop: String Quartet No. 4: “Illuminations” (19:30)  
Osvaldo Golijov: *Tenebrae* (12:42)

**Avalon String Quartet**  
**Blaise Magniere, violin**  
**Marie Wang, violin**  
**Anthony Devroye, viola**  
**Cheng-Hou Lee, cello**