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News

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Supreme Court's Ruth Bader Ginsburg Celebrated Through Songs on New Album by Soprano Patrice Michaels on Cedille Records

*'Notorious RBG in Song' CD illuminates
the jurist's personal and professional life
in a musical tribute marking her 25 years
on the U.S. high court*

Soprano Patrice Michaels and pianist Kuang-Hao Huang offer a collection of songs saluting U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg on her completion of 25 years on the high court on *Notorious RBG in Song*, a new album from Cedille Records.

A longtime crusader for equal rights, Ginsburg has become a pop-culture icon known to her fans as “Notorious RBG,” a wry nod to the late rap artist The Notorious B.I.G.

Notorious RBG in Song, available June 8, 2018, features works by five contemporary American composers celebrating Justice Ginsburg's family and professional life. These include Michaels' *THE LONG VIEW: A Portrait of Ruth Bader Ginsburg in Nine Songs*; Lori Laitman's “Wider than the Sky”; Vivian Fung's “Pot Roast à La RBG”; Stacy Garrop's “My Dearest Ruth”; and Derrick Wang's “You Are Searching in Vain for a Bright-Line Solution.” All but two of the songs — “Anita's Story,” now incorporated into Michaels' song cycle, and “Wider than the Sky” — are world-premiere recordings (Cedille Records CDR 90000 178).

Michaels, who conceived the album, studied composition with Dominick Argento and others, but put aside this creative pursuit in favor of a classical singing career — until recently. The album's centerpiece is her cycle, *THE LONG VIEW*, which reveals key aspects of Justice Ginsburg's personal life

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and career through letters, remembrances, conversations, and even Court opinions. Michaels’ extensive research to construct a concise but detailed narrative was aided by her unique relationship to the subject: she’s married to Justice Ginsburg’s son, James, founder and president of Cedille Records and the album’s producer.

The cycle, which draws on jazz rhythms and harmonies within a contemporary classical context, opens with a song based on a text written when the future jurist (b. 1933) — and second female justice in Supreme Court history — was ten years old. It’s a 1943 letter from Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas to a law school dean that envisions a day when a woman might conceivably qualify as a law clerk at the Court. Subsequent songs portray Justice Ginsburg’s inspirational mother Celia Amster Bader; life-loving father-in-law Morris Ginsburg; ever-supportive husband Martin D. Ginsburg; and Anita Escudero, a typist who experienced a political awakening in the course of transcribing trial lawyer Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s handwritten notes. Later songs depict telling incidents from the childhoods of Justice Ginsburg’s daughter, Jane Ginsburg, and son, James. The penultimate song highlights key portions of some of the jurist’s most influential dissenting opinions in Supreme Court cases. The final song offers Justice Ginsburg’s philosophy on the role of law in American democracy and candid observations on the job requirements of her position.

Prolific art-song composer Lori Laitman’s setting of the Emily Dickinson poem “Wider than the Sky” wasn’t written for Justice Ginsburg, but it was performed at her 80th birthday celebration along with three works the Ginsburg children commissioned for that celebration: Michaels’ “Anita’s Story” and the songs heard after Laitman’s on the album.

JUNO Award-winning Canadian composer Vivian Fung’s humorous “Pot Roast à la RBG” provides a glimpse into the Ginsburg household evening routine circa 1970, archly related by daughter Jane.

Stacy Garrop has received awards from the Fromm Music Foundation, Barlow Endowment, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and other prestigious organizations. She based the extraordinarily touching “My

Dearest Ruth” on the farewell love letter the Justice’s husband, Martin, wrote shortly before his death in 2010.

Composer, lyricist, and librettist Derrick Wang has received awards from musical organizations including ASCAP and BMI. The aria “You Are Searching in Vain for a Bright-Line Solution” comes from his 2015 one-act comic opera, *Scalia/Ginsburg*. The aria cites Justice Ginsburg’s views on interpreting the U.S. Constitution while traversing varied musical genres: operatic quotations, jazz waltz, and gospel.

Recording Team

Notorious RBG in Song was produced by James Ginsburg and engineered by Bill Maylone June 28–29, 2017; November 21, 2017; and January 16, 2018, at the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts at the University of Chicago.

The Artists

Soprano Patrice Michaels, “a formidable interpretative talent” (*The New Yorker*), is a veteran of opera, concert, and recital stages coast to coast and overseas. A vocalist of “spectacular and diverse gifts” (*Journal of Singing*), she has appeared on more than 20 recordings for the Albany, Amadis, Cedille, Decca, and Neos labels. Formerly a professor of music at Lawrence University’s Conservatory of Music, she now serves as Director of Vocal Studies at the University of Chicago. Her website is www.patricemichaels.com.

Collaborative pianist extraordinaire Kuang-Hao Huang frequently performs with singers from Lyric Opera of Chicago and instrumentalists from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. A member of Fulcrum New Music Project, he has also appeared in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s MusicNOW contemporary music series. He can be heard in recordings on the Cedille, Centaur, Naxos, and Neos labels. His website is www.khpiano.net.

Cedille Records

Launched in November 1989, Grammy Award-winning Cedille Records (pronounced say-DEE) is dedicated to showcasing and promoting the most noteworthy classical artists in and from the Chicago area.

The audiophile-oriented label releases every new album in multiple formats: physical CD; 96 kHz,

24-bit, studio-quality FLAC download; and 320 Kbps MP3 download.

An independent nonprofit enterprise, Cedille Records is the label of Cedille Chicago, NFP. Sales of physical CDs and digital downloads and streams cover only a small percentage of the label’s costs. Tax-deductible donations from individual music-lovers and grants from charitable organizations account for most of its revenue.

Headquarters are at 1205 W. Balmoral Ave., Chicago, IL 60640; call (773) 989-2515; email: info@cedillerecords.org. Website: cedillerecords.org.

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Notorious RBG in Song
Patrice Michaels, soprano
Kuang-Hao Huang, piano
(Cedille Records CDR 90000 178)

Patrice Michaels: THE LONG VIEW: A Portrait
of Ruth Bader Ginsburg in Nine Songs (37:50)
I. PROLOGUE: Foresight (2:16)
II. Celia: An Imagined Letter from 1949 (6:35)
III. Advice from Morris (3:32)
IV. On Working Together (4:22)
V. Anita’s Story (4:10)
VI. New York, 1961 (2:15)
VII. The Elevator Thief (5:02)
VIII. Dissenter of de Universe: Five Opinions
and a Comment (5:38)
IX. EPILOGUE: The Long View,
Questions Answered (3:36)
Lori Laitman: Wider than the Sky (1:57)
Vivian Fung: Pot Roast à La RBG (4:23)
Stacy Garrop: My Dearest Ruth (6:31)
Derrick Wang: You Are Searching in Vain for a
Bright-Line Solution, from *Scalia/Ginsburg* (5:26)