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# News

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Recording release date: September 14, 2018

## **Thomas Hampson Sings ‘Songs from Chicago’ on New Cedille Records Album**

*Revered American Baritone Performs Works  
by Ernst Bacon, Florence Price, John Alden Carpenter,  
Margaret Bonds, and Louis Campbell-Tipton*

Thomas Hampson, America’s foremost baritone and a champion of the art of classic song, makes his Cedille Records debut with an album of songs by early mid-twentieth-century composers from Chicago.

On *Songs from Chicago*, available September 14, 2018, Hampson sings settings of poetry by Walt Whitman, Langston Hughes, and Rabindranath Tagore composed by Ernst Bacon, Florence Price, John Alden Carpenter, Margaret Bonds, and Louis Campbell-Tipton (Cedille Records CDR 90000 180).

All of them, Hampson says, “have distinguished themselves in history as great voices of the artistic American narrative.”

Hailed as “an outstanding recitalist” by *Grove Music Online*, Hampson is accompanied on *Songs from Chicago* by Kuang-Hao Huang, collaborative pianist of choice for Chicago’s top singers and instrumentalists.

The album’s 28-page booklet includes an introductory essay by Hampson, biographical sketches of the composers, and original texts of the poems set to music.

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## **Project's Origins**

James Ginsburg, Cedille Records founder and president and the album's producer, says, "I've had the pleasure of hearing Thomas Hampson sing on many occasions over the years. And we've had the opportunity to socialize at post-performance receptions. Initially casual discussions led to this recording, which weds his love of American art song with Cedille Records' Chicago-centric focus." Hampson writes in the album's liner notes, "I have long been a fan of Cedille Records and its mandate to record the works of Chicago-based composers and performers."

Hampson notes that, in researching repertoire, he was "surprised at the list of prominent, yet still relatively unknown American composers of song who emanated from or settled in Chicago."

He says *Songs from Chicago* illustrates "what an incredibly lively musical environment these people were working in. It's a thrill to be a part of that energy every time I return to Chicago, in the midst of a city that has such a vibrant artistic history."

## **'Masterful' Songs**

Chicago-born Ernst Bacon (1898–1990) wrote more than 250 songs, plus many other works. "His songs are particularly masterful in their naturalistic setting of the English language," Hampson writes. He performs Bacon's settings of seven Walt Whitman poems: "Lingering Last Drops," "World Take Good Notice," "The Last Invocation," "On the Frontiers," "The Divine Ship," "Darest thou Now, O Soul," and "Grand is the Seen."

A native of Little Rock, Ark., Florence Price (1887–1953) and her family moved to Chicago from the South in the 1920s. She became the first African-American woman to have an orchestral piece played by a major American orchestra when her *Symphony in E Minor* was performed by Frederick Stock and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1932. Among her most lasting works are the Langston Hughes settings on this album, "My Dream" (1935) and "Song to the Dark Virgin" (1941).

Hampson writes that lifelong Chicagoan John Alden Carpenter (1876–1951) "truly changed

the landscape of American song with his inspired use of impressionistic musical elements, innovative text setting, and predominantly through-composed structure.” His most famous songs include those on the album: selections from his *Four Negro Songs* to Langston Hughes texts and his cycle of 1913 Nobel Prize in Literature-winning Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore’s *Gitanjali*, a collection of poems about love and life. This is the first recording of the complete *Gitanjali* set, including the spoken poems that bookend the six-song cycle.

Like her friend and mentor Florence Price, Chicago native Margaret Bonds (1913–1972) was attracted to the new poetic language of Langston Hughes, which mirrored the contemporary African-American experience. Among her most celebrated works are the four Hughes-based songs on this album, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” (1940) and the collection *Three Dream Portraits* (1959), both written after she relocated to New York and became a figure in Harlem’s artistic scene.

Chicago-born Louis Campbell-Tipton (1877–1921) moved to Paris in 1901, where he concentrated on songs that became favorites of foreign singers on American recital tours. Hampson sings the composer’s setting of Whitman’s “Elegy.”

*Songs from Chicago* was made possible through the support of the nonprofit Hampsong Foundation, which Hampson launched in 2003 to promote intercultural dialogue and understanding through the art of classical song — poetry set to music. Its website is [hampsongfoundation.org](http://hampsongfoundation.org). The album is also supported by a generous grant from Howard Gottlieb and Barbara Greis.

### **Recording Team**

*Songs from Chicago* was produced by James Ginsburg and engineered by Bill Maylone during sessions held in October 2017, January 2018, and June 2018 in Anne & Howard Gottlieb Hall at the Merit School of Music, Chicago, Illinois.

## **Thomas Hampson**

Baritone Thomas Hampson has been honored as a Metropolitan Opera Guild “Met Mastersinger” and inducted into both the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and *Gramophone* magazine’s Hall of Fame. The New York Philharmonic’s first Artist-in-Residence, Hampson has received a Concertgebouw Prize, Library of Congress Living Legends Award, and the Hugo Wolf Medal for outstanding achievements in the art of song interpretation, among other honors. His discography includes more than 170 albums, including Grammy and Grand Prix du Disque Award winners. Hampson frequently performs with some of Chicago's premiere classical music organizations, including Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and the Ravinia Festival, and has presented master classes and other educational events in collaboration with the Merit School of Music, Lyric Opera, and Ravinia's Steans Music Institute. His website is [thomashampson.com](http://thomashampson.com).

## **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](mailto:info@cedillerecords.org). Website: [cedillerecords.org](http://cedillerecords.org).

Cedille Records is distributed in the Western Hemisphere by Naxos of America and its distribution partners, by Select Music in the U.K., and by other independent distributors in the Naxos network in classical music markets around the world.

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*Songs from Chicago*  
**Thomas Hampson, baritone**  
**Kuang-Hao Huang, piano**  
**Cedille Records CDR 90000 180**

**Ernst Bacon**, poems by Walt Whitman

- 1 Lingerin Last Drops (1:34)
- 2 World Take Good Notice (0:54)
- 3 The Last Invocation (2:02)
- 4 On the Frontiers (3:42)
- 5 The Divine Ship (2:00)
- 6 Darest thou Now, O Soul (3:59)
- 7 Grand Is the Seen (2:50)

**Florence Price**, poems by Langston Hughes

- 8 Song to the Dark Virgin (1:55)
- 9 My Dream (2:02)

**John Alden Carpenter**, from *Four Negro Songs*,

- poems by Langston Hughes
- 10 Shake your brown feet, honey (2:03)
  - 11 The Cryin' Blues (2:19)
  - 12 Jazz-Boys (1:11)

**Margaret Bonds**, poems by Langston Hughes

- Three Dream Portraits*
- 13 Minstrel Man (1:38)
  - 14 Dream Variation (1:41)
  - 15 I, Too (1:39)
  - 16 The Negro Speaks of Rivers (3:51)

**Louis Campbell-Tipton**, poem by Walt Whitman

- 17 Elegy (2:42)

**John Alden Carpenter**, *Gitanjali*, poems by Rabindranath Tagore (21:40)

18. *Credo* (reading) (0:59)
- 19 When I bring to you colour'd toys (2:21)
- 20 On the day when death will knock at thy door (3:00)
- 21 The Sleep that flits on Baby's Eyes (2:25)
- 22 I am like a Remnant of a Cloud of Autumn (4:25)
- 23 On the Seashore of Endless Worlds (5:28)
- 24 Light, My Light (2:18)
- 25 *Epilogue* (reading) (0:24)