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News

CD to be released Sept. 27, 2011

Cedille Records Releases First Volume of Pacifica Quartet's Complete Shostakovich Cycle

Unique 'Soviet Experience' Series Includes Works by Composer's Contemporaries

The Pacifica Quartet, which garnered great acclaim for its 2010–11 performances of Dmitri Shostakovich's complete string quartets in New York and Chicago and at the University of Illinois, is reprising that cycle for chamber-music enthusiasts everywhere with a series of studio recordings for Cedille Records.

The first in a four-part series, *The Soviet Experience: String Quartets by Dmitri Shostakovich and his Contemporaries, Volume I*, available September 27, includes Shostakovich's String Quartets No. 5 in B-flat major, Op. 92; No. 6 in G major, Op. 101; No. 7 in F-sharp minor, Op. 108; and No. 8 in C minor, Op. 110; and Nikolai Miaskovsky's String Quartet No. 13 in A minor, Op. 86 (Cedille Records CDR 90000 127). The release is a two-CD set, priced as a single CD.

The Pacifica's Shostakovich cycle for Cedille is unique for including quartets by other notable Soviet-era composers. Future installments will offer Prokofiev's String Quartet No. 2, Moises Weinberg's String Quartet No. 6, and Alfred Schnittke's String Quartet No. 3 as companions to the Shostakovich quartets.

"The series will appeal to anyone interested in great Russian music of the 20th century," said Cedille founder and president James Ginsburg. "It's also a great value for the consumer."

Multiple Grammy Award-winner Judith Sherman is the series producer and engineer. She produced the Pacifica's 2008 Naxos CD of Elliott Carter's String Quartets Nos. 1 and 5, which won a

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Grammy for Best Chamber Music Performance.

The Pacifica recorded *The Soviet Experience, Vol. 1*, between July 2010 and May 2011 in closed sessions in the Foellinger Great Hall of Krannert Center at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

In the CD liner notes, William Hussey of Roosevelt University's Chicago College of Performing Arts writes of Shostakovich's quartets: "From a musical standpoint, they form, arguably, the greatest quartet cycle of the twentieth century." He finds the quartets imbued with "a delicacy that evokes the composer's personal self more than his other music."

Shostakovich (1905–1974) wrote the Quartet No. 5 in 1952. It was among a number of pieces from that period that he wrote for personal satisfaction, while writing propaganda and patriot music out of necessity. He initially withheld the quartet from public performance to avoid the potential wrath of Stalin's cultural commissars. The Fifth Quartet introduces characteristics seen in Shostakovich's later quartets: "an unusual number of movements . . . and melodic similarities between movements that are performed without a break," Hussey writes.

The String Quartet No. 6 (1956), with its four movements and lyrical themes, appears to follow a traditional mold. But those who have studied it closely have found surprises beneath its seemingly untroubled lyricism, Hussey says. It's also remarkable for using the same closing figure to end each movement.

Hussey describes the String Quartet No. 7 (1960) as "a remarkably inventive work that signals a significant stylistic change in the composer's quartet writing." Various elements combine to give the quartet "a united, single-movement quality, which is an essential characteristic of many of the quartets that follow."

The Quartet No. 8 (1960) is the best-known quartet in the entire cycle, thanks to "its deeply personal voice and the tragic emotional arc it travels," Hussey writes. It's an emotionally intense work that has claimed a solid place in the string quartet repertoire.

Nikolai Miaskovsky (1881–1950) is the only major Soviet composer who was also a member of the pre-Revolution generation of Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov. His rarely recorded, masterfully written Quartet No. 13 (1950) is his final quartet and penultimate opus. The four-movement work demonstrates great ingenuity and craftsmanship within a conventional harmonic language.

Cedille's *The Soviet Experience* CD series takes its name from The Soviet Arts Experience, Chicago's 2010–2012 citywide festival of Soviet-era art and music spearheaded by the University of Chicago. The festival idea was inspired by the Pacifica's plan to perform the Chicago premiere of the complete Shostakovich string quartet cycle. The concerts became an integral part of the festival.

The Pacifica Quartet

Named Musical America's 2009 Ensemble of the Year, the Pacifica Quartet was recently appointed quartet-in-residence at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, the position held for 43 years by the Guarneri String Quartet. Founded in 1994, the Pacifica won the 1998 Naumberg Chamber Music Award and Chamber Music America's 2002 Cleveland Quartet Award. In 2006, the Pacifica received an Avery Fisher Career Grant and was featured on the cover of *Gramophone* magazine. The ensemble has received stellar reviews for its four previous Cedille Records recordings, including the complete Mendelssohn string quartets. The Pacifica is faculty quartet in residence at the University of Illinois and resident performing artist at the University of Chicago and Longy School of Music in Cambridge, Mass. Quartet members are Simin Ganatra, violin; Sibbi Bernhardsson, violin; Masumi Per Rostad, viola; and Brandon Vamos, cello. The ensemble's website is www.pacificaquartet.com.

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, www.cedillerecords.org. Cedille albums are also available via the label’s website as CD-quality 16-bit FLAC downloads, extra-high-quality (256 Kbps) MP3 file downloads, and physical CDs.

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*The Soviet Experience: String Quartets by Dmitri Shostakovich
and his Contemporaries, Vol. I*
(Cedille Records CDR 90000 127)

Shostakovich: String Quartet No. 5 in B-flat major, Op. 92 (31:45)
String Quartet No. 6 in G major, Op. 101 (25:38)
String Quartet No. 7 in F-sharp minor, Op. 108 (12:13)
String Quartet No. 8 in C minor, Op. 110 (21:56)
Nikolai Miaskovsky: String Quartet No. 13 in A minor, Op. 86 (25:36)

Pacifica Quartet