

Cedille Records

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News

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Eighth Blackbird Teams Up with Sleeping Giant for 'Hand Eye' from Cedille Records

**Indie label issues world-premiere recording
inspired by cutting-edge contemporary art**

American new-music sextet Eighth Blackbird, which has won Grammy Awards for each of its four most recent Cedille Records albums, teams with the adventurous composers of the Sleeping Giant collective for *Hand Eye*, a suite sparked by cutting-edge works of contemporary art.

A world-premiere recording, *Hand Eye* will be released April 8 on CD and as a digital download (Cedille Records CDR 90000 162). It will be Eighth Blackbird's eighth Cedille album.

Written expressly for Eighth Blackbird, *Hand Eye* comprises *Checkered Shade* by Timo Andres, *Mine, Mime, Meme* by Andrew Norman, *Conduit* by Robert Honstein, *South Catalina* by Chris Cerrone, *By-By Huey* by Ted Hearne, and *Cast* by Jacob Cooper. Hearne and Cooper co-composed [*crossfade*] as a bridge between their works.

For inspiration, each composer selected a work from the private collection of the Maxine and Stuart Frankel Foundation for Art in Bloomfield Hills, Mich. *Hand Eye* was commissioned by the foundation, for the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, and by Carnegie Hall, in celebration of Eighth Blackbird's twentieth anniversary season.

Each composer contributed liner notes to the album's 12-page booklet. Andres describes how, in *Checkered Shade*, patterned pen-and-ink abstractions inspired him to write a piece

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“structured as a gradual zoom outward. Tiny fragments of repeated material . . . eventually coalesce into an expressive chorale.” Norman’s *Mine, Mime, Meme* places the cellist in a sonic space where the other instrumentalists mimic his playing, similar to how small, mirrored machines in one art installation follow the movements of nearby observers. Honstein’s three-movement *Conduit* takes its cue from an interactive digital sculpture pulsing with colors and the world of touch-screen electronic devices.

Cerrone’s *South Catalina* draws its inspiration from two sources: an audio-responsive interactive light sculpture and the composer’s discomfort with Southern California’s perpetual sunshine. Hearne’s *By-By Huey*, a soul-infused jam session lead by an “aggressive and unhinged” piano, is the composer’s response to a portrait of the accused murderer of Black Panther Party co-founder Huey P. Newton. Cooper’s *Cast* fashions an array of distinctive musical gestures around a vibraphone line — then subtracts the vibraphone the way an artist making paper casts removes the original objects.

Images of the works that inspired *Hand Eye* and additional information can be found at <http://www.eighthblackbird.org/hand-eye-artwork>.

***Hand Eye* in Concert**

The centerpiece of Eighth Blackbird’s 2015–2016 touring season, *Hand Eye* is an evening-length work with visuals and stage production elements. The ensemble also presents an “unplugged” version of the concert without visuals.

Hand Eye received its world premiere at the June 2015 Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival. *Detroit Free Press* critic Mark Stryker described it as “a rewarding and charismatic 75-minute piece that proved to be strikingly unified in its musical materials and emotional effect.”

Reviewing *Hand Eye*’s New York premiere January 18, 2016, at Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall, *The New York Times*’ Anthony Tommasini wrote, “Each piece of this diverse, eclectic and colorful suite had its own voice and character, qualities that came through in Eighth Blackbird’s

exhilarating performance.” The *Wall Street Journal*’s Allan Kozinn observed that “the musical responses [to the art], though composed separately rather than collaboratively have shared elements – not least, a restless stylistic omnivorousness — that make them seem like interlocking pieces of a puzzle.”

‘Super-musicians’ eighth blackbird

The Chicago-based, MacArthur Award and four-time Grammy Award-winning sextet Eighth Blackbird has provoked and impressed audiences for 20 years across the country and around the world with impeccable precision and a signature style. The ensemble’s “super-musicians” (*Los Angeles Times*) combine the finesse of a string quartet, the energy of a rock band, and the audacity of a storefront theater company. The name “Eighth Blackbird” derives from the eighth stanza of Wallace Stevens’s evocative, aphoristic poem, “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird.”

A long-term relationship with Chicago’s Cedille Records has produced a catalog of seven acclaimed recordings and four Grammy Awards: for *strange imaginary animals* (2008), *Lonely Motel: Music from Slide* (2011), *Meanwhile* (2013), and *FILAMENT* (2016).

Ensemble members on *Hand Eye* are flutist Tim Munro; clarinetist Michael J. Maccaferri; violinist Yvonne Lam; cellist Nicholas Photinos; percussionist Matthew Duvall; and pianist Lisa Kaplan. (The sextet’s current lineup includes new flutist Nathalie Joachim.) More at eighthblackbird.org.

Sleeping Giant is a New York collective of six “talented guys” (*The New Yorker*) who are “rapidly gaining notice for their daring innovations, stylistic range and acute attention to instrumental nuance” (WQXR-FM). Their website is www.sleepinggiantcomposers.com.

Recording Dates and Venue

Hand Eye was produced by Elaine Martone of Sonarc Music and engineered by Michael Bishop June 29–July 1, 2015, at I. V. Lab Studios, Chicago, Ill.

Cedille Records

Marking its 26th anniversary during the 2015–2016 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: 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 (formerly The Chicago Classical Recording Foundation). 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.

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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Hand Eye **(Cedille Records CDR 90000 162)**

Timo Andres: *Checkered Shade* (13:57)
Andrew Norman: *Mine, Mime, Meme* (9:42)
Robert Honstein: *Conduit: I. Touch* (4:12); *Conduit: II. Pulse* (5:01);
Conduit: III. Send (5:12)
Christopher Cerrone: *South Catalina* (10:53)
Ted Hearne: *By-By Huey* (10:33)
Hearne/Cooper: *[crossfade]* (1:55)
Jacob Cooper: *Cast* (10:45)

Eighth Blackbird