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# News

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## **Contemporary Classical Meets World Music on Fifth House Ensemble and Baladino's 'Nedudim' From Cedille Records**

### **Chamber Group and Mediterranean Folk Band Collaborate on Album of World Premieres**

*2014 Rome Prize-winning composer Dan Visconti  
and Pat Metheny Group producer Steve Rodby  
put their stamps on a genre-defying project*

Chicago's Fifth House Ensemble, known for its narrative chamber music projects and new-music initiatives, and Baladino, a Mediterranean folk band from Israel that merges pop sensibilities with musical traditions from the Middle East and beyond, join forces on *Nedudim*, a genre-defying, world-premiere album of all-new arrangements and three new compositions.

*Nedudim* (pronounced neh-doo-DEEM), available June 10, offers eleven vocal and instrumental compositions and arrangements, some anchored in Sephardic music and Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) texts. The program draws from a palette of international influences, including Indian raga and folk melodies from the Middle East, Europe, and the U.S.

*Nedudim*, Hebrew for "wanderings," evokes the album's geography-hopping global perspective.

An unprecedented collaboration for both groups of musicians, *Nedudim* is Fifth House Ensemble's second Cedille Records album and Baladino's first commercial release (Cedille Records CDR 90000 164).

The album's new compositions and arrangements were created by Dan Visconti, Fifth House Ensemble's resident composer and 2014 Rome Prize winner, and Baladino instrumentalist and lead arranger Thomas Moked Blum.

Modern orchestral instruments meet their exotic Asian and North African counterparts — bansuri, duduk, ney, oud, shofar (ram's horn) — on works ranging from the rollicking opening track, *Si Veriash a la Rana* featuring Baladino vocalist Yael Badash, and meditative drone strings and jazz-

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flute riffs of *Raga Etude* to the warm sultry, romantic landscape of *Noches Noches* and the heartfelt, captivating closing track, the Ladino folk ballad *Tres Ermanikas Eran*.

At the center of the program are two irresistible, uptempo traditional Ladino songs: the Sephardic romance *La Esclava*, with a newly written chorus to tie the verses together, and *La Kumida*. Both showcase Badash's vocal agility and interpretive prowess and the instrumentalists' fluid virtuosity and spontaneity.

*Nedudim*'s singular version of contemporary American composer Ken Benshoof's 1974 *Traveling Music: iii. Driving*, punctuated by notes from a ram's horn, epitomizes a seamless merger of ancient sounds with experimental art music. Visconti describes it as "a musical journey through a menagerie of exotic-non-western instruments."

Visconti's blues-influenced *Black Bend* is a mix of written and improvised solos played over the original score. He calls it "a wild ride for both the players and the audience." Blum and Visconti's *Greek Blues*, an homage to their shared memories of this uniquely American idiom, employs ancient scales to create "an experience that is both old and new," Visconti writes in the CD booklet.

A bittersweet Americana moment arrives with Robert Beaser's Civil War southern folk tune *He's Gone Away* from *Mountain Songs*, for singer, flute, and guitar.

### **Cultural Collaboration**

According to Fifth House Ensemble flutist and executive director Melissa Snoza, her ensemble colleague and husband, bassist Eric Snoza, discovered Baladino by happenstance while surfing the Web. Everyone was astonished with Baladino's musicianship. Members of the two groups met face-to-face when Baladino was in Chicago performing at a world music festival, and they decided to pursue the collaboration that spawned *Nedudim*.

"We just loved Baladino and wanted to find a way to work together," Melissa Snoza said, in an interview with Cedille Records. "We're passionate about really fantastic music that propels us into a world we've never worked in before."

Composer Visconti says, "The inspiration behind *Nedudim* began with a simple question: What is your earliest musical memory?"

The musicians posed that question to members of Chicago cultural organizations representing residents of Indian, Israeli, Spanish, and Iranian descent. Their answers informed the selection of works — and the writing of new works — that became the *Nedudim* program.

For example, Visconti's *Native Tongues* was inspired by early musical memories and family experiences of Baladino, Fifth House Ensemble, and community members who shared their thoughts. It begins and ends with a setting of the Ladino lullaby *Durme Durme*, which singer Badash recalled from her childhood. In between are instrumental passages that include a didgeridoo.

After touring *Nedudim* in Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan, Fifth House Ensemble and Baladino went into the studio and recorded it for Cedille.

### **Recording Dates and Venues**

*Nedudim* was produced by Steve Rodby of Pat Metheny Group fame, whose discography includes fourteen Grammy award winners. Principal recording engineer was Cedille's own three-time Grammy nominee Bill Maylone. The album was recorded September 14–19, 2015, at Chicago Recording Company, Chicago, Ill., and January 17, 2016, at Pluto Studios, Tel Aviv, Israel.

### **Fifth House Ensemble**

Praised by *The New York Times* for its “conviction, authority, and finesse,” Fifth House Ensemble takes its name from the astrological house of pleasure. Recent seasons have seen Fifth House Ensemble at Chicago's Ravinia Festival and Museum of Contemporary Art, New York's Miller Theater, and Texas Performing Arts. The ensemble has performed and premiered works by contemporary composers Stacy Garrop, Caleb Burhans, Mason Bates, and John Zorn, among others. The *San Francisco Chronicle* praised the ensemble's 2014 debut album on Cedille Records, *Excelsior*, as “spirited music-making of the finest kind.” More information at [www.fifth-house.com](http://www.fifth-house.com).

### **Baladino**

Comprised of Israeli musicians born to immigrant parents from other Middle Eastern countries, Mediterranean folk band Baladino takes its name from two words: “Baladi,” which means “land” in Arabic, and “Ladino,” which refers to both the language and the culture of Sephardic Jews who lived in Spain through the late 15th century. The group updates the Ladino tradition with modern extended techniques, improvisation, and electronic influences. Baladino self-released its first album, *Dos Amantes*, in 2013. The band tours internationally and is a featured ensemble with Arts Midwest World Fest. More information at [www.baladino.com](http://www.baladino.com).

### **Cedille Records**

Marking its 26<sup>th</sup> 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. 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).

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***Nedudim***

**(Cedille Records CDR 90000 164)**

1. Si Veriash a la Rana (2:36)  
Traditional, arr. Baladino and Dan Visconti
2. Noches Noches (5:16)  
Traditional, arr. Thomas Moked Blum  
and Dan Visconti
3. Black Bend (4:24)  
Dan Visconti
- \*4. Greek Blues (4:02)  
Thomas Moked Blum  
and Dan Visconti
5. Mountain Songs: He's Gone Away (4:49)  
Robert Beaser, arr. Dan Visconti
6. La Esclava (3:37)  
Traditional, arr. Thomas Moked Blum  
and Dan Visconti
7. La Kumida (4:05)  
Traditional, arr. Thomas Moked Blum  
and Dan Visconti
- \*8. Native Tongues (9:05)  
Dan Visconti
- \*9. Raga Etude (4:34)  
Baladino and Thomas Moked Blum
10. Traveling Music: iii. Driving (10:48)  
Ken Benschopf
11. Tres Ermanikas Eran (4:05)  
Traditional, arr. Thomas Moked Blum  
and Dan Visconti

**Fifth House Ensemble  
Baladino**

**\*New composition receiving world-premiere recording  
All arrangements are world-premiere recordings**