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News

Recording release date: August 12, 2016

Lincoln Trio Honors Its Ancestry With Works by English, Armenian and Swiss Composers on Cedille Records

'Trios from Our Homelands' Album Features
Music by Rebecca Clarke, Arno Babajanian,
and Frank Martin

Celebrated Chicago chamber ensemble Lincoln Trio honors its families' national origins on a highly personal new album of substantial 20th-century piano trios by composers from England, Armenia, and Switzerland.

Trios From Our Homelands, the Lincoln Trio's third album for Cedille Records, will be released August 12 (Cedille Records CDR 90000 165).

For this distinctive project, Lincoln Trio violinist Desirée Ruhstrat, cellist David Cunliffe, and pianist Marta Aznavoorian chose pieces they'd long been eager to record, written by composers born in countries where their families have roots.

Cunliffe, from Plymouth, England, picked Rebecca Clarke's Trio for violin, violoncello, and piano. Aznavoorian, born in Evanston, Ill., and whose family is Armenian on both sides, had long admired Arno Babajanian's Piano Trio in F-Sharp Minor. For Ruhstrat, a native of Milwaukee, Wis., whose mother was born in Switzerland, Frank Martin's *Trio sur des mélodies populaires irlandaises* fit the bill.

The Lincoln Trio premiered the program in concert August 2015 at the Ravinia Festival's Bennett Gordon Hall, Highland Park, Ill.

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“Once again, the Lincoln Trio demonstrates its special gift for creating fresh programs of satisfying, less-familiar works that surprise, engage, and delight audiences,” says James Ginsburg, Cedille Records founder and president. “In doing so, they’re bringing well-deserved attention to major works by composers who are not household names.

Attractive Melodies

Rebecca Clarke (1886–1979) studied composition at London’s Royal College of Music with Charles Villiers Stanford — his first female student. Along with her early Viola Sonata, from 1919, her 1921 Piano Trio established her credentials as an important composer.

The Piano Trio received its premiere in London in 1922, where the audience “heard a trio full of attractive melodies combined and presented in a context of virtuosity and musical ingenuity,” writes Andrea Lamoreaux in the album’s liner notes.

In an interview with Cedille Records, cellist Cunliffe said his appreciation of Clarke’s Viola Sonata led him to the Piano Trio. “Clarke’s was one of a great many early-20th-century trios written in a neoclassical vein, but somehow hers got left behind.” He calls it “technically very challenging for all three instruments, with quite a few unison passages. It’s impressionistic, influenced by Ravel, and a lot of musical colors need to emerge.”

A national cultural hero in his native Armenia, Babajanian (1921–1983) enjoyed a major career as composer and pianist within the former Soviet Union. Among his early champions was Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian. Babajanian wrote a cello concerto for Mstislav Rostropovich, who later praised him as “a brilliant composer . . . who, despite his early death, made a significant contribution to the music of our time.”

Pianist Aznavoorian says Babajanian’s Piano Trio contains “big, difficult piano parts, like a concerto. Yet, it’s so masterfully crafted that all three instruments can shine in a soloistic manner.”

She credits an old acquaintance with introducing her to Babajanian’s Piano Trio. In an interview with Cedille Records, she recounted how a non-musician she dated while in graduate school at the New England Conservatory of Music played a recording of the third movement for her

and urged her to learn the piece. “I fell in love with it. It has the fire and passion I admire in Armenian culture.” Her affection for the piece, however, outlasted the relationship. “It turned out that I loved the music but not the man,” Aznavoorian said. “Especially that third movement.”

She added, “It’s a special experience and honor for me to record this prodigious trio from an Armenian composer whom I greatly admire. Armenian music, like the people themselves, is very expressive and soulful. It’s immensely rewarding to perform this affecting piece for our audiences.”

Martin’s trio, written in Paris in 1925, is based on less-familiar Irish melodies. Violinist Ruhstrat says it’s “always been one of my favorite trios to perform. The last movement is like a bit of Irish fiddling. It’s a lot of fun to play.” It’s also challenging in its rhythmic complexity. “The whole piece is written in cross-rhythms, with lots of intertwining between cello and violin,” she says.

She says it’s yet another Lincoln Trio piece that prompts audiences to ask, “Why haven’t I heard this before?”

Recording Dates and Venues

Trios From Our Homelands was produced by James Ginsburg and engineered by multiple Grammy nominee Bill Maylone August 24–26 and October 5, 2015, in the Merit School of Music’s Anne & Howard Gottlieb Hall, Chicago, Ill.

Lincoln Trio

Lauded by *The New Yorker* as an “outstanding Chicago-based piano trio,” the Lincoln Trio was formed in 2003 and takes its name from the motto of its home state of Illinois (“Land of Lincoln”).

The ensemble made its full-length Cedille album debut with *Notable Women*, featuring works by Lera Auerbach, Stacy Garrop, Jennifer Higdon, Laura Elise Schwendinger, Augusta Read Thomas, and Joan Tower. *Gramophone* said, “The performances by the Lincoln Trio are models of vibrancy and control. The notables on this recording could hardly have better champions.” *The Strad* praised the ensemble’s “interpretative flair” and “supreme clarity of expression.” Cedille’s *Turina: Chamber Music for Strings and Piano* is an album on which “sensitive and polished readings by the Lincoln Trio and

assisting musicians reveal what is best about this neglected repertory” (*Chicago Tribune*).

ClassicsToday.com called the Trio’s Turina album proof that “it’s still possible to put together worthwhile programs of serious classical music that are wholly winning and simply delightful.”

The Trio performed on the Grammy-nominated Naxos recording of James Whitbourn’s *Annelies* for soprano, mixed choir, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano.

The ensemble’s website is www.lincolntrio.com.

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. 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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Trios From Our Homelands
(Cedille Records CDR 90000 165)

Rebecca Clarke: Trio for violin, violoncello, and piano (24:33)
Arno Babajanian: Piano Trio in F-Sharp Minor (23:21)
Frank Martin: *Trio sur des mélodies populaires irlandaises* (16:00)

Lincoln Trio