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# News

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For Release: November 2004

## INVENTIVE BRAZILIAN AND POLISH CONCERTOS GET WORLD PREMIERES ON NEW CD

***Alex Klein, First Oboist of the Chicago Symphony (1995–2004),  
Performs Concertos Written Specially for Him***

Alex Klein, principal oboist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for the past nine seasons, gives world premiere recordings of two immensely challenging concertos, written expressly for him, on a new Cedille Records CD with Paul Freeman conducting the Czech National Symphony Orchestra.

*Twentieth Century Oboe Concertos*, a program assembled by Klein himself, includes first recordings of the late young Brazilian composer Marco Aurelio Yano's vibrant and exotic *Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra* (1991) and Polish composer Pawel Sydor's dramatic *Virtuti Militari (Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra)* (1992), plus Bohuslav Martinu's neoclassical gem, *Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra* (1955), a pillar of the oboe repertoire. The new release is a two-CD set priced as a single disc (Cedille CDR 90000 079).

At the invitation of music director Daniel Barenboim, Klein joined the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as first-chair oboe in 1995, a position he held when he recorded these works for Cedille in June 2003. Klein resigned from the orchestra in July 2004 due to the onset of a neurological disorder, musician's focal hand dystonia, affecting the fingers of his left hand.

When breaking the news of Klein's condition, *Chicago Tribune* music critic John von Rhein praised him as "one of the world's most accomplished oboe virtuosos." In a review of his farewell concert with the CSO, *Chicago Sun-Times* critic Wynne Delacoma called him "one of the orchestra's most distinctive and distinguished players. The sound of his rich, lyrical oboe will be missed."

In correspondence with Cedille, Klein explains the extreme technical and interpretive challenges posed by the Yano and Sydor compositions: “These are not ordinary concertos.”

Yano (1963–1991) and Klein, both natives of Brazil, met at the Planalto Arts Institute in Sao Paulo. Commissioned by and dedicated to Klein, Yano’s *Oboe Concerto* is set in three movements: “(In Memoriam),” “Seresta,” and “Frevo.” The urgent, inventive first movement is autobiographical — it parallels Yano’s tragically brief life from birth and development to crisis and untimely death — and was actually composed last; Yano completed the manuscript just before he died from brain cancer at age 27.

The “Seresta” and “Frevo” movements radiate Brazilian influences. The former is based on a traditional, nostalgic song, the latter on an Afro-Brazilian dance.

“I requested that Marco push the known limits of oboe technique so as to provide players with a much needed evolution of the instrument’s capabilities,” Klein writes in the CD booklet.

Elaborating on that in subsequent correspondence, Klein cites the 45-second high note at the end of the first movement, representing the “flat line” of a hospital monitor when the patient’s vital signs have ceased. To maintain the seamless continuity of this critical note, Klein could not fall back on the “circular breathing” technique typically used for extended runs.

Klein adds, “Technically, this is the fastest work ever written for the oboe. In some instances the oboist must play more than 20 notes per second, and the entire range of the oboe is treated as if it is equally easy to play.” The oboist must wear a “variety of hats” to convey a story line and its varied settings.

Sydor (b. 1970) and Klein first met at the Oberlin Conservatory, where Sydor was studying composition and Klein was teaching oboe. “I was so impressed by his playing,” Sydor writes in the CD booklet notes. *Virtuti Militari* is named for and commemorates the highest Polish military order of valor. The concerto is in one movement with five distinguishable sections.

In Klein’s correspondence about the work’s performance challenges, he points to the wide dynamic and tonal ranges, including a “high B” played softly at the end and “notoriously difficult” low notes played “at top speeds in the cadenzas.” The oboe also plays a character: the

tragic hero in a musical parable about an individual's quixotic battle against a corrupt, oppressive power elite — represented by the low strings — and the passive, easily manipulated masses who do its bidding, represented by the full orchestra.

One of the outstanding Czech composers of the modern era, Martinu (1890–1959) wrote in a tonal style all his own. His *Oboe Concerto* is “short, expressive, and quite virtuosic,” writes annotator Andrea Lamoreaux in the CD program notes. The concerto is unusual in that a piano plays a prominent role in the small orchestra, almost like a second solo instrument. Martinu gave the oboist only one solo cadenza, but it is “a chromatic and richly ornamented tour de force that displays the instrument to its full advantage,” Lamoreaux writes.

Oboist Klein appeared as featured soloist on a previous Cedille recording, *Oboe Concertos of the Classical Era* (Cedille CDR 90000 045), with works by Krommer and Hummel.

Cedille Records (pronounced say-DEE) is dedicated to showcasing the most noteworthy classical artists in and from Chicago. The nonprofit label is an arm of The Chicago Classical Recording Foundation.

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**TWENTIETH CENTURY OBOE CONCERTOS**  
**(Cedille Records CDR 90000 079)**

**Bohuslav Martinu: *Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra* (15:44)**  
**Pawel Sydor: *Virtuti Militari (Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra)* (27:50)**  
**Marco Aurelio Yano: *Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra* (37:44)**

**Alex Klein, oboe**  
**Czech National Symphony Orchestra**  
**Paul Freeman, conductor**