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# NEWS & INFORMATION

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## MAJOR MIDWEST COMPOSERS PLOW DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS WITH PIANO CONCERTOS

The world premiere recordings of two contrasting piano concertos by major 20th-century American composers with ties to the Midwest present what presidential campaigners might call a bridge to the past *and* a bridge to the future. Here, listeners don't have to choose between the two (*Chicago Concertos: Piano Concertos by Rudolph Ganz and John La Montaine*. Ramon Salvatore, piano. Chicago Sinfonietta/Slovak Radio Symphony, Paul Freeman, cond. Cedille CDR 90000 028).

Ganz's Romantically styled Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, Op. 32 (1940) and La Montaine's jazzy, impressionistic Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 59 (1989) are vastly different. Yet besides having spent significant periods of their lives in the Chicago area, the composers share the goal of writing "music that appeals to a wide audience, infusing their work with enough ingenuity and substance to satisfy the most discriminating performer," writes Stephen C. Hillyer in the program notes.

Commissioned by the Chicago Symphony for its 50th anniversary, Ganz's concerto, like the rest of his output, is "cosmopolitan, conservative, and -- especially in the work at hand -- uncommonly witty, as was the man himself," Hillyer writes. Born in Switzerland,

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Ganz studied piano with Busoni in Berlin. He came to Chicago in 1901 and began a long association with the Chicago Musical College, including 25 years as its director (1929-1954). He was music director of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra (1921-27) and led its first recordings for the Victor label. Ganz conducted the New York Philharmonic's Young People's Concerts and guest conducted the symphony orchestras of Los Angeles and Chicago.

Born in 1920 in Oak Park, Ill., home of Frank Lloyd Wright's "prairie style" architecture, La Montaine (who currently resides in Hollywood, Calif.), studied theory at the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago and composition at Eastman with Howard Hanson. He also studied piano with Ganz for a short time. La Montaine played keyboard for the NBC Symphony during Toscanini's last four seasons (1950-54).

"La Montaine's Fourth Piano Concerto," writes Hillyer, "is that rarity in this century (or any other for that matter): a listener-friendly work that immediately appeals with memorable tunes and catchy rhythms, yet grows increasingly impressive with each rehearing." The work, commissioned for the Waterbury (Connecticut) Symphony's 50th anniversary, received its world premiere in 1990.

A champion of neglected American piano music, pianist and teacher Ramon Salvatore has received praise for his groundbreaking concerts and recordings on Cedille and other labels. Sadly, this is Mr. Salvatore's last recording: he died of cancer on August 5, 1996, at age 51. This recording is dedicated to his memory.

Mr. Salvatore commanded national attention as a pianist who combined rhythmic panache and warm lyric cogency with a pioneering spirit. The recipient of a major grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1990, he presented a three-concert series titled "American Piano Music in the Grand Tradition" at New York's Weill Recital Hall and again

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at Chicago's Cultural Center. The series encompassed 120 years of masterly keyboard works that reflected international traditions, yet spoke with a distinctly American voice. *The New York Times* praised his "splendid audacity" in programming and "bravura performances."

Mr. Salvatore also presented recitals at the National Gallery in Washington, New York's Merkin Hall, Chicago's Orchestra Hall, the Dame Myra Hess Series in Chicago and Los Angeles, and Detroit's Cranbrook Series, and concertized widely abroad, giving recitals in Spain, Morocco, Scotland, and England.

In a recent letter to Cedille Records, La Montaine says, "The world has lost a great pianist." He writes that Mr. Salvatore's recordings of his music "set a standard for all future performances. . . . A composer cannot but be grateful to have such abilities lavished on his works."

Cedille CDs are distributed by Bayside Distribution and JEM Music Corp. and are available nationally at finer classical record stores. For a free catalog and the whereabouts of local retail outlets, consumers are invited to write to Cedille Records, 5255 N. Lakewood Ave., Chicago, IL 60640-2220, or call (773) 989-2515.

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*CHICAGO CONCERTOS:*  
*PIANO CONCERTOS BY RUDOLPH GANZ AND JOHN LA MONTAINE*  
Cedille CDR 90000 028

GANZ: Piano Concerto in E-Flat Major, Op. 32 (25:10)  
LA MONTAINE: Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 59 (28:51) (10:45)\*

Ramon Salvatore, piano  
Chicago Sinfonietta/Slovak Radio Symphony\*  
Paul Freeman, conductor