
NEWS & INFORMATION

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For Release: May 1994

For: Cedille Records
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NEW CD A MEGA-MILESTONE IN MICROTONAL MUSIC

Out-of-kilter, intriguing, and absolutely delightful

"There is a crazy wit in this"

Easley Blackwood's Twelve Microtonal Etudes for Electronic Music Media, a landmark exploration that drew widespread critical praise upon its release in 1980, has been reissued for the first time on compact disc (Cedille CDR 90000 018).

Also on the new CD are two never-before-released Blackwood microtonal works: Fanfare in 19-note Equal Tuning and Suite for Guitar in 15-note Equal Tuning.

"Easley Blackwood has composed and produced contemporary music that is quite beautiful," wrote Frank Peters of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (Feb. 22, 1981) in a review of the études. He described them as "music that holds the attention and stimulates the mind, music that keeps yielding new attractions after many rehearsals."

The intriguing études culminated Blackwood's research, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, into the techniques and expressive possibilities of microtonal tunings. Microtonal tunings are those that divide an octave in some other manner than into 12 equal parts. Blackwood wrote études for equal tunings of 13 to 24 notes to the octave

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and has likened the task to writing a "sequel" to "The Well-Tempered Clavier," J.S. Bach's famous collection of preludes and fugues in each of the major and minor keys.

Blackwood let the "flavor" of each tuning suggest an established musical form or style for each étude: a Classical piano sonata (track no. 13), Russian nationalism (track no. 8), jazz (track no. 11), the sound of South Pacific gamelans (track no. 5), and the form of a Baroque violin sonata (track no. 4). This approach also allows listeners to hear how microtonal tunings affect familiar musical genres.

"He has done no less than tame the wildest musical beasts and create ideal domestic environments for them," wrote *Fanfare's* reviewer.

"There is a crazy wit in this, as though one is following a madcap chase through a Chinese laundry of overlapping and interlocking tonalities," wrote Conrad Cummings in the *Computer Music Journal*.

"It seems to me that in the long run, the microtonal scales I've been working with offer the most positive direction that music could go in," Blackwood told *Keyboard* magazine (May 1982). "This is where there still remain things to be discovered. Attractive things to be discovered."

The *Fanfare in 19-note Equal Tuning* (1981) was commissioned by Chicago fine arts radio station WFMT, along with fanfares by other Chicago-area composers, to celebrate the station's 30th anniversary.

The *Suite for Guitar in 15-note Equal Tuning* makes use of the properties Blackwood discovered when he wrote the microtonal étude in 15-note tuning. It's cast in four movements with dance-like rhythms akin to those found in Baroque suites. "For the performance of microtonal music on conventional acoustic instruments, those with fretted strings are the least problematic because the frets automatically and accurately establish the

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location of each pitch," Blackwood writes in the CD booklet.

Cedille's CDs are distributed by Empire Music Group 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, 700 W. Barry Ave., Suite 3-E, Chicago, IL 60657-4587, or call (312) 404-0758.

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Blackwood: Fanfare in 19-note Equal Tuning, Op. 28a;
Twelve Microtonal Etudes for Electronic Music Media, Op. 28;
Easley Blackwood, polyfusion synthesizer

Blackwood: Suite for Guitar in 15-note Equal Tuning, Op.33
Jeffrey Kust, guitar
Cedille Records CDR 90000 018

SUGGESTIONS FOR RADIO AIRPLAY:

Classical

Track No. 1 - Fanfare in 19-note Equal Tuning (2:25)

Track No. 4 - Etude in 21-note Equal Tuning (4:48)

Track No. 8 - Etude in 17-note Equal Tuning (2:51)

Track Nos. 14-17 - Suite for Guitar in 15-note Equal Tuning (9:38)

New Age

Track No. 5 - Etude in 23-note Equal Tuning (3:17)

Track No. 7 - Etude in 15-note Equal Tuning (3:35)

Track No. 8 - Etude in 17-note Equal Tuning (2:51)

5/23/94