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News

Recording release date: July 14, 2022

Black Oak Ensemble Revives Rarely Heard French String Trios July 14 on Cedille Records

**Bastille Day release ‘Avant l’orage’ offers seven Interwar-era works
including world premiere recordings of trios by
Henri Tomasi, Robert Casadesus,
and Gustave Samazeuilh**

Album evokes legacy of renowned Trio Pasquier

Black Oak Ensemble, the Chicago-based string trio with an international profile, performs rarely heard works for violin, viola, and cello written between the World Wars on *Avant l’orage: French String Trios 1926–1939*, their second and newest Cedille Records album, set for release on Bastille Day, July 14, 2022, a French national holiday.

A double-album priced as a single disc, *Avant l’orage* (Before the Storm) includes world-premiere recordings of Henri Tomasi’s Trio à cordes en forme de divertissement, Robert Casadesus’s Trio à cordes, and Gustave Samazeuilh’s Suite en trio pour violon, alto et violoncelle. Also heard are Jean Cras’s Trio pour violon, alto et violoncelle; Émile Goué’s Trio pour violon, alto et violoncelle; Jean Françaix’s Trio, and Gabriel Pierné’s Trio pièces en trio (Cedille Records CDR 90000 212).

Five of the pieces, including all of the first recordings, were written for the highly virtuosic Trio Pasquier, a renowned ensemble of French brothers whose worldwide stature was second only to the Budapest String Quartet.

“Their influence was enormous,” according to Black Oak Ensemble’s French-born violist Aurélien Fort Pederzoli, speaking for the ensemble in a Cedille Records podcast with label founder and president James Ginsburg. “We recorded an album largely based on their existence.”

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Pederzoli's Black Oak Ensemble colleagues are Swiss-American violinist Desirée Ruhstrat and British-born cellist David Cunliffe, both of whom are also founding members of the twice Grammy-nominated Lincoln Trio. Pederzoli was a founding member of the groundbreaking, Grammy-nominated Spektral Quartet.

"A string trio is about three soloists," he says. "I would argue that the parts for string trios are more difficult than for string quartets because there is no hiding. You're playing all the time."

String trio repertoire, he says, remains "relatively untapped."

The complete podcast interview is available on demand at <https://bit.ly/3nn3UnK>.

Wit and Lyricism

Pederzoli describes *Avant l'orage* as an album of "very diverse music, full of wit, a lot of lyricism, and definitely very unique voices."

Tomasi was born in Marseilles to Corsican parents. His Mediterranean roots are heard in the Provençal folk melody referenced in his *Trio à cordes en forme de divertissement* (1938), noted for its colorful, kaleidoscopic finale. Renowned as one of the great pianists of the mid-20th century, Casadesu combines fine craftsmanship and poetic sincerity in his *Trio à cordes* (1938). It is the only published work among his numerous trios, quartets, and quintets. Samazeuilh, a disciple of Claude Debussy and other noted French composers, wrote his *Suite en trio pour violon, alto et violoncelle* (1937) in the form of a Baroque dance suite. Originally written for piano, Samazeuilh rescored the work as a trio, and the piece was widely performed by Trio Pasquier during the 1930s and 40s.

Celtic-infused folk music of composer and French naval officer Cras's native Brittany emerges in his *Trio pour violon, alto et violoncelle* (1926), as does an homage to Beethoven's Op. 132 string quartet. Goué wrote his *Trio pour violon, alto et violoncelle* (1939), energized with folk-dance elements, on the eve of his World War II army deployment. Françaix's *Trio* (1933) displays his trademark textural clarity, agility, and sense of humor. Among his last works, Pierné's *Trois pièces en trio* (1937) has even more fun with the listener with its Balzac-inspired satirical finale conjuring intoxicated, stumbling "fat cats" (a reference to priests or clerics) out on the town.

The project includes a 20-page album booklet with program notes by Elinor Olin, professor at Northern Illinois University School of Music. The booklet is free to download from www.cedillerecords.org.

Musical Discoveries Abroad

Passionate about unjustly neglected string trio repertoire, Black Oak Ensemble constantly seeks to discover hidden gems for its concerts and recordings while on tour overseas. Its two Cedille albums “were born more or less from our international touring,” Pederzoli says, which includes several performances a year in Europe. The works on *Avant l'orage* emerged from suggestions by French and Corsican contacts they met on tour as well as from a comprehensive search of trio scores in the archives of a Paris music library.

Grammy-Winning Recording Team

Avant l'orage was recorded by Grammy-winning producer James Ginsburg and multiple Grammy-winning engineer Bill Maylone between June 9, 2021, and January 27, 2022, at Nichols Concert Hall at the Music Institute of Chicago in Evanston, Illinois, and North Shore Congregation Israel in Glencoe, Illinois.

Black Oak Ensemble on Cedille Records

Black Oak Ensemble made its recording debut with the 2019 Cedille Records release *Silenced Voices*, featuring works by promising, early 20th-century European Jewish composers who perished in concentration camps and elsewhere in Nazi-occupied Europe. The album received a top rating from *Classics Today*, which praised Black Oak’s “insightful, committed, and masterful performances.” *The Times* of London applauded the ensemble’s “fierce eloquence.”

Black Oak Ensemble is named for the towering black oak tree that’s native to its home state of Illinois. Its website is www.blackoakensemble.com.

Cedille Records

Launched in November 1989 by James Ginsburg, Grammy Award-winning Cedille Records (pronounced say-DEE) is dedicated to showcasing and promoting the most noteworthy classical artists in and from the Chicago area. The label’s catalog of more than 200 front-line albums brims with attractive, off-the-beaten-path repertoire from the Baroque era to the present day. Works from the classical canon, when they do appear, are usually heard in particularly imaginative pairings.

Cedille has recorded more than 180 Chicago artists and ensembles, with over 80 making their professional recording debuts on the label. Its catalog includes the world premieres of more than 400 classical compositions.

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 — and on major streaming services.

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.

Cedille's headquarters are at 4311 N. Ravenswood Ave., Suite 202, Chicago, IL 60613; call 773-989-2515; email: info@cedillerecords.org. Website: cedillerecords.org.

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Avant l'orage: French String Trios 1926–1939

Black Oak Ensemble

Cedille Records CDR 90000 212

Disc 1

Henri Tomasi: Trio à cordes en forme de divertissement* (18:01)

Jean Cras: Trio pour violon, alto et violoncelle (24:00)

Émile Goué: Trio pour violon, alto et violoncelle (14:31)

Jean Françaix: Trio (12:40)

Disc 2

Robert Casadesus: Trio à cordes* (15:44)

Gustave Samazeuilh: Suite en trio pour violon, alto et violoncelle* (20:56)

Gabriel Pierné: Trio pièces en trio (21:02)

* *World Premiere Recording*