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News

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Civitas Ensemble Showcases Works by Contemporary Chinese Composers on ‘Jin Yin’ from Cedille Records, Available January 24 for Lunar New Year

Chamber group of top Chicago musicians performs world-premiere recordings of new music by Zhou Long, Chen Yi, Lui Pei Vivian Fung, and Yao Chen

Chicago’s Civitas Ensemble presents new instrumental chamber works by living Chinese composers, each with a singular perspective on Western and Far Eastern musical sensibilities, on *Jin Yin* (“Golden Tone”), the group’s second and newest album.

Available January 24, 2020, the day before Chinese New Year, *Jin Yin* comprises world-premiere recordings of works by Yao Chen, Vivian Fung, and Lu Pei, plus premieres of specially made new arrangements of pieces from Zhou Long and Chen Yi (Cedille Records 90000 193).

The project was spearheaded by Shanghai-born violinist Yuan-Qing Yu, a Civitas founding member and assistant concertmaster of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. She says Civitas has worked closely with the composers and greatly admires their work.

Civitas named the album for the Chinese phrase meaning “Golden Tone” because of the substance and clarity of musical expression heard in each piece. Yu also notes that the element gold plays an important role in Chinese tradition, and it figures in some of the works on the album.

Violinist Yu is joined by her Civitas colleagues Kenneth Olsen, Chicago Symphony Orchestra assistant principal cello; J. Lawrie Bloom, CSO bass clarinet; and Winston Choi, who heads the piano department at Roosevelt University’s Chicago College of Performing Arts. Guest artists include CSO flutist Emma Gerstein, CSO principal percussion Cynthia Yeh, and award-winning pipa master Yihan Chen.

Mystical, Rhapsodic

First recordings include Yao Chen’s mystical, rhapsodic *Emanations of Tara*, named for a revered figure in Tibetan Buddhism and written expressly for the Civitas Ensemble. Canadian-born Vivian Fung’s *Birdsong*, a virtuosic piece for violin and piano opens and closes with evocations of

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bird calls. Lu Pei's alternately vigorous and lyrical *Scenes Through Window* is imbued with both American minimalist rhythms and South China folk traditions.

Leading off the program, Zhou Long's engaging *Five Elements* evokes metal, wood, water, fire, and earth, while Chen Yi's serene, ethereal *Night Thoughts* was inspired by a Tang Dynasty poem. Both receive their first recordings in the composers' own arrangements made specifically for the Civitas Ensemble. The arrangement of *Five Elements* was commissioned for the Civitas Ensemble by Chicago's Chinese Fine Arts Society.

Recording Team

Jin Yin was recorded by Grammy-nominated producer James Ginsburg and Grammy-nominated engineer Bill Maylone on February 27 and March 1–2, 2018, in Anne and Howard Gottlieb Hall at the Merit School of Music, Chicago, Illinois; and August 29–30, 2019, at the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts at the University of Chicago.

Civitas Ensemble

The Civitas Ensemble is “among Chicago's finest and most adventurous chamber groups” (*Chicago Classical Review*). Founded in 2011, the ensemble made its recording debut in 2018 with its “engaging and energizing” (*Strings*) *Alla Zingarese* album on Cedille Records with Czech violin virtuoso Pavel Šporcl and His Gypsy Way Ensemble. *AllMusic.com* called it “conceptually intriguing and a great deal of fun.” The Civitas is in its ninth year as Ensemble-in-Residence at Valparaiso University's Department of Music. The ensemble has, from its inception, pursued a vigorous community-outreach program “bringing the healing power of music to those with limited access to live performances.”

Cedille Records

Launched in November 1989, 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.

A highlight of Cedille's 30th anniversary season, 2019–2020, is its first-ever Emerging Artist Competition. Individual performers and ensembles from the Chicago area are competing for the opportunity to make a recording produced by and released on the award-winning label. Semifinal and final rounds of judging will take place in May 2020 during public performances by the contestants.

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 1205 W. Balmoral Ave., Chicago, IL 60640; call (773) 989-2515; email: info@cedillerecords.org. Website: cedillerecords.org.

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Jin Yin

Civitas Ensemble

Cedille Records CDR 90000 193

Zhou Long: *Five Elements* (23:24)

with Yihan Chen, pipa; Cynthia Yeh, percussion;
and Emma Gerstein, flute and piccolo

Chen Yi: *Night Thoughts* (8:37)

Lu Pei: *Scenes Through Window* (16:03)

with Emma Gerstein, flute

Vivian Fung: *Bird Song* (9:41)

Yao Chen: *Emanations of Tara* (19:03)

with Yihan Chen, pipa