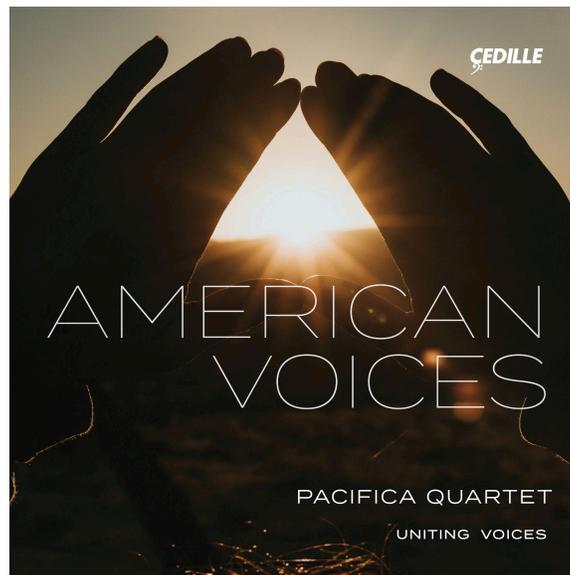


*For Immediate Release*



## **CEDILLE RECORDS TO RELEASE PACIFICA QUARTET'S *AMERICAN VOICES*, MAY 10**

**Album highlights the influence of American popular and traditional music on works by Antonín Dvořák, Florence Price, Louis Gruenberg, and James Lee III**



**CHICAGO, ILLINOIS (APRIL 10)** — The multiple Grammy Award-winning **Pacifica Quartet** continues its exploration of American musical traditions with the release of ***American Voices*** on Cedille Records, **Friday, May 10**. The album features four works that weave the sound of the classical string quartet together with important threads in the country's broader musical fabric, from 19<sup>th</sup>-century folk music traditions to early 20<sup>th</sup>-century trends in popular music. The featured works are Antonín Dvořák's String Quartet in F Major, Op. 96 ("American"), Florence Price's String Quartet in G major, Louis Gruenberg's Four Diversions for String Quartet, Op. 32, and James Lee III's new commission for the album, *Pitch In*. The latter is scored for string quartet and children's choir, sung on this world-premiere recording by Chicago's Uniting Voices under conductor Josephine Lee.

The **String Quartet in F major, Op. 96**, that opens *American Voices* was composed not by an American, but by celebrated Czech composer **Antonín Dvořák**, who nevertheless served as classical music's most important early advocate for a distinctly American sound. He composed the work, nicknamed the "American" quartet, in 1893 while on vacation from his directorship of the National Conservatory in New York City. In his letters, Dvořák remarks that his works composed in the United States—most notably this quartet and the "New World" symphony—possess a uniquely American color and character that is distinct from his music written back home. The "American" quartet does not contain any known quotations of American folk melodies, but the work is cast in a rustic, pentatonic style that even today is used in film and other media to evoke rural 19<sup>th</sup>-century American life.

The folk influence evident in **Florence Price's String Quartet in G major**, by contrast, was a natural product of the composer's upbringing in Little Rock, Arkansas. It is particularly on display in the work's lyrical second movement, especially its outer sections, which resemble traditional American hymns. Price composed the work in 1929, two years after having relocated to Chicago as part of the Great Migration from the Jim Crow South. This string quartet was her first in the genre. While she went on to produce additional works for this instrumentation, this G-major quartet remained unfinished, with only two movements completed.

Written in 1930 by American composer **Louis Gruenberg, Four Diversions for String Quartet, Op. 32**, taps into a different sound world—that of the jazz age. In the work's third and longest movement, rich harmonies with telltale "blue" notes are heard over a rocking bass that at times resembles (the then-popular) boogie-woogie. That movement's melodic character and the episodic nature of the whole work foreshadow the cinematic leanings of its composer, who would go on to achieve acclaim and multiple Academy Award nominations for his work scoring films during the Golden Age of Hollywood.

*American Voices* closes with a world premiere specially commissioned for the album from Baltimore-based American composer **James Lee III**, who has been praised by *The Washington Post* for his "bright, pure music." Titled **Pitch In**, the piece addresses the social justice issue of food insecurity and is based on a poem of the same title by Sylvia Dianne Beverly. The composer writes:

*The work is in three contrasting, continuous sections with a melodic motivic figure on the words, "People are hungry," frequently followed by, "yet people continue to waste food." Throughout the work, the character of the music changes as the words fluctuate between stating the issue, hope, despair, and a call to action.*

On his incorporation of traditional American musical styles into his music, he adds:

*When I use folk elements in my pieces, it has been mostly with major and minor pentatonic scales. For example, in the middle section of Pitch In, when the string parts are a little more animated, I hinted at an E-minor pentatonic scale in the voice parts as they sing "So others might eat..."*

*Pitch In* is not only a musical composition, but a social justice project. As such, Cedille Records will donate 25% of *American Voices*' first-year of revenues from direct CD sales via [cedillerecords.org](http://cedillerecords.org) to the Greater Chicago Food Depository.

*American Voices* is the Pacifica Quartet's 14<sup>th</sup> recording for Cedille Records, following upon their "extraordinary" (*Strings*) Grammy-nominated album, *American Stories*, featuring clarinetist Anthony McGill. About their prior album, *Contemporary Voices*, which won the 2021 Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music Performance, *BBC Music Magazine* declared, "the Pacifica's ensemble playing is of the highest standard."

The Pacifica Quartet's performances and recordings this season include projects with clarinetist Anthony McGill and guitarist Sharon Isbin. In addition, the Quartet collaborates with soprano Karen Slack for performances of James Lee III's *A Double Standard*, a new song cycle commissioned by Carnegie Hall, Chamber Music Detroit, and the Shriver Hall Concert Series. Renamed the University of Chicago's Don Michael Randel Ensemble in Residence for the 2023–2024 season, the Pacifica Quartet performs and gives masterclasses at the University of Chicago throughout the academic year. Additional performances are presented by the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Chamber Music Detroit, Denver Friends of Chamber Music, and Caramoor.

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## ABOUT THE PACIFICA QUARTET

With a career spanning nearly three decades, the multiple Grammy Award-winning **Pacifica Quartet** has achieved international recognition as one of the finest chamber ensembles performing today. The Quartet is known for its virtuosity, exuberant performance style, and often-daring repertory choices. Having served as quartet-in-residence at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music for the past decade, the Quartet also leads the Center for Advanced Quartet Studies at the Aspen Music Festival and School, and was previously the quartet-in-residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Formed in 1994, the Pacifica Quartet quickly won chamber music's top competitions, including the 1998 Naumburg Chamber Music Award. In 2002 the Quartet was honored with Chamber Music America's Cleveland Quartet Award and appointment to Lincoln Center's The Bowers Program (formerly CMS Two), while in 2006 the ensemble was awarded a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant. With its powerful energy and captivating, cohesive sound, the Quartet has established itself as the embodiment of the senior American quartet sound. In addition to winning a Grammy Award with Cedille Records, the Pacifica Quartet won the 2009 Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music Performance for its recording of Elliott Carter's String Quartets Nos. 1 and 5 on the Naxos label. Learn more about the Pacifica Quartet at [pacificaquartet.com](http://pacificaquartet.com).

## ABOUT 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. A nonprofit record label, Cedille's mission is to produce and disseminate audiophile recordings presenting the finest classical music performers and composers in and from Chicago. The recordings further the careers and legacies of these Chicago artists as Cedille invests in not only the recordings but in the artists represented on them. 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, including world premieres of more than 400 classical compositions. Works from the classical canon, when they do appear, are usually heard in particularly imaginative pairings. Cedille never removes albums from its catalog and each recording is a permanent documentation of the artist's work. With more than 180 Chicago artists and ensembles, over 80 making their professional recording debuts on the label, Cedille brings the area's most significant classical music artists to a worldwide listening public. Cedille recordings are available on CD, as MP3 and hi-resolution FLAC downloads, and on all major streaming platforms. Learn more about Cedille Records and explore the label's catalog at [cedillerecords.org](http://cedillerecords.org).

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**PACIFICA QUARTET: AMERICAN VOICES**  
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**Pacifica Quartet**

Simin Ganatra, violin  
Austin Hartman, violin  
Mark Holloway, viola  
Brandon Vamos, cello

**ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)**

**String Quartet in F Major, Op. 96, “American” (27:14)**

1. I. Allegro ma non troppo (9:50)
2. II. Lento (7:45)
3. III. Molto vivace (3:51)
4. IV. Finale: vivace ma non troppo (5:36)

**FLORENCE PRICE (1887–1953)**

**String Quartet in G major (16:34)**

5. I. Allegro (9:29)
6. II. Andante moderato – Allegretto (7:02)

**LOUIS GRUENBERG (1884–1964)**

**Four Diversions for String Quartet, Op. 32 (8:47)**

7. I. Allegro moderato (2:01)
8. II. Moderato ed à capriccio (1:54)
9. III. Andante moderato e delicato (2:54)
10. IV. Allegro burlando (1:51)

**JAMES LEE III (b. 1975)**

**11. *Pitch In* (12:26) — world-premiere recording**

with Uniting Voices (children's choir)

Josephine Lee, conductor

TT: (65:23)

Produced and engineered by James Ginsburg and Bill Maylone.

Recorded May 12–13, 2023 in Auer Hall at Indiana University Bloomington and January 23, 2024 in the Sasha and Eugene Jarvis Opera Hall (Gruenberg) and Mary Patricia Gannon Concert Hall (Lee) at DePaul University in Chicago, IL.

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