

For Immediate Release



VIOLINIST KARISA CHIU'S DEBUT RECORDING, *HOME*, TO BE RELEASED ON CEDILLE RECORDS, SEPTEMBER 12

The album unites Chiu — Cedille 2021 Emerging Artist Competition Finalist — and pianist Zhu Wang on a recording featuring works by Debussy, Fauré, Scott, Sibelius, and Augusta Read Thomas



CHICAGO, ILLINOIS (AUGUST 4, 2025) — On **September 12, 2025**, Cedille Records releases *HOME*, featuring 25-year-old rising American violinist **Karisa Chiu** and renowned Chinese pianist **Zhu Wang**. This collection of five works explores the many meanings of “home” throughout Chiu’s life and includes Jean Sibelius’s Five Pieces, Claude Debussy’s Violin Sonata, Augusta Read Thomas’s *Incantation* for Solo Violin, Cyril Scott’s *Lotus Land* (arr. Fritz Kreisler), and Gabriel Fauré’s Violin Sonata No. 1. A finalist in Cedille Records’ inaugural **Emerging Artist Competition** (2021), Chiu is the first new violinist in over 20 years to record a solo violin album for Cedille.

Since its founding in 1989 under the guidance of James Ginsburg, Cedille Records has built a reputation for elevating Chicago’s leading classical musicians and composers. The label nurtures the next generation through its Emerging Artist Competition (EAC), which offers soloists and small ensembles from the Chicago area the opportunity to record a professional debut album. Following the success of inaugural winner, Julian Velasco, and his critically acclaimed album, *As We Are*, Karisa Chiu’s *HOME* marks Cedille’s second EAC-related album release and is a

testament to the label's ongoing commitment to supporting and elevating Chicago's most promising emerging talent.

Drawing from her Chicago upbringing, Korean-Chinese heritage, and reflections during the pandemic, *HOME* is an evocative exploration of belonging and the meaning of "home."

"Upon hearing the word 'home,' each person will recall something different — a community, a person, a city, a culture, a memory. This album is not only a story of what home means to me, but an invitation for you to reflect on the things in your life that define home," Chiu writes in her personal note for the booklet.

The theme of hardship also binds the album: Debussy composed his Violin Sonata in the shadow of his terminal cancer; Sibelius wrote during a dark period of relapse and financial despair as war loomed over Europe; Thomas composed *Incantation* for a friend facing terminal illness; and Fauré created his sonata amid the heartbreak of a lost five-year relationship. Viewed through Chiu's personal perspective, these works — born from grief and loss — gain new significance, showing how art can evolve, deepen, and resonate in unexpected ways.

Sibelius's Five Pieces and Debussy's Violin Sonata entered Chiu's life through her father, who performed them in a violin-piano duo concert during his senior year of college that united him with his future wife. These pieces became fixtures in Karisa's home as her parents played them countless times throughout her childhood, soundtracking early memories of love and family. At Curtis, Chiu discovered Thomas's *Incantation*, which, after learning of Thomas's connection to Chicago, became a symbol of both her ties to her hometown and her evolving bond with the Curtis community. Raised in a mixed cultural background, with a Chinese father and a Korean mother, Chiu returned to Korea with her mother for the first time in almost a decade in 2022, and gave a recital together. Amidst family and Korean culture, Chiu felt a profound sense of belonging as they performed Fauré's Violin Sonata. To this day, playing that sonata transports her back to Korea, embodying music's power to bridge time and memory. While each piece was initially written in times of loss, these works gain a new perspective through Chiu's personal lens, transforming sorrow into a narrative of connection, remembrance, and belonging.

Born into a Swedish-speaking family in Finland, Sibelius embraced Finnish nationalism by incorporating Finnish language, literature, and folk music into his works. His Five Pieces for Violin and Piano blends urbane salon music with Finnish folk elements. Engaging in a dynamic interplay, the violin leads with virtuosic flourishes and wide leaps. At the same time, the piano provides harmonic depth and rhythmic contrasts, creating a seamless blend of sophistication and light-hearted charm. From lively rondos to serene, pastoral evocations, these works strike a balance between sophistication and national identity, showcasing Sibelius's ability to fuse diverse musical influences.

A short, three-movement work, Debussy's Violin Sonata is a farewell and return, reaching toward distant tonalities and Iberian influences. The first movement features shifting rhythms and modal harmonies, including the Phrygian cadence — a shared harmonic trait with Sibelius's music. The

second movement presents a playful scherzo marked by key changes and enigmatic lyricism. The third movement recalls the first's theme in a distant, fragmented manner before venturing into sweeping, pentatonic gestures and exploring unconventional textures, embodying a vitality that defies classical form.

A lyrical, chant-inspired solo for violin, Thomas' *Incantation* unfolds with patience and quiet intensity. Derived from the Latin *incantatio*, meaning "art of enchanting," incantations are often associated with funereal practices; Thomas wrote hers for violinist Catherine Tait, who performed it just weeks before succumbing to terminal cancer. Beginning questioningly, the work gracefully unfolds into a lyrical piece, contemplatively moving to the first moment of vertical harmony: a minor sixth followed by another, a half step lower, eventually ending on a question: a major seventh lingering in the air, unresolved.

Cyril Scott's *Lotus Land* reflects ideas of Eastern mysticism, relaxation, and dreaming. Inspired by Homer's *Odyssey* and Tennyson's poem "The Lotos-Eaters," the lotus symbolizes an escape from modernity and the loss of self in peaceful reverie. In Fritz Kreisler's arrangement for violin and piano, the music captures this idealized indolence through cozy harmonies and exotic scales, with the violin dancing lightly above the piano's lush textures.

Finally, Fauré's Violin Sonata provides a standout close to the album. One of Fauré's first mature works, the piece is celebrated for its inventiveness and expressivity. The first movement, influenced by Schumann, shifts from intense pathos to quiet introspection, navigating dramatic changes with ease and elegance. The second movement introduces a heartbeat rhythm in the piano that evolves into a waltz, symbolizing the transition from grief to joy. In the final two movements, the joy is sustained as the music alternates between exuberance and exquisite lyricism, culminating in gentle repose.

ABOUT KARISA CHIU

Renowned for her "easy virtuosity ... humor, nuance ... [and] playful[ness]" (*Cleveland Classical*), Karisa Chiu came to international prominence with her first prize win at the 2021 Isang Yun Violin Competition, resulting in her debut with the KBS Symphony Orchestra at the Seoul Arts Center. She has since gone on to solo in some of the most renowned concert halls around the world, including Severance Hall, Alice Tully Hall, and the Casals Forum, and receive top accolades from the Menuhin, Leopold Mozart, Stulberg, and Irving M. Klein Competitions. As the recipient of the 2025 Gerschen Cohen Award, she will make her Carnegie Hall recital debut in Weill Recital Hall in spring 2026.

Raised in a musical family, Karisa began her studies at age two with her father, Cornelius Chiu, a first violinist in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. She collaborates frequently with her mother and uncle, pianists Inah Choi-Chiu and Frederic Chiu. The Chiu family has given annual concerts for over two decades at the Festival of the Arts at Mohonk Mountain House, north of New York City. Karisa is currently pursuing an Artist Diploma at the Juilliard School with Catherine Cho and

Donald Weilerstein. She received her Master's degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music and earned her Bachelor's degree from the Curtis Institute. Her preceding mentors include Jaime Laredo, Malcolm Lowe, Ida Kavafian, and Almita Vamos.

ABOUT ZHU WANG

Pianist Zhu Wang has been praised as “especially impressive” and “a thoughtful, sensitive performer” by *The New York Times*. Recently named Gold Medalist at the 2024 New Orleans International Piano Competition, Zhu also received First Prize in the 2020 Young Concert Artists Susan Wadsworth International Auditions, and was a finalist in the Clara Haskil International Piano Competition. He has been a featured soloist on WQXR's Young Artist Showcase and WFMT's Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concerts. Recent engagements include performing with the Orchestra of St. Luke's, New York Youth Symphony at Carnegie Hall, the Brevard Philharmonic Orchestra, Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, and a concert tour through Europe and North America with violinist Randall Goosby. Zhu is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music and The Juilliard School, where he recently earned his Master of Music degree under the tutelage of Emanuel Ax and Robert McDonald. Zhu gratefully acknowledges the support of the Bagby Foundation for the Musical Arts.

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 well over 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 artists' 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 Cedille Records and explore the label's catalog at cedillerecords.org.

HOME

CEDILLE RECORDS — CDR 90000 239

Karisa Chiu, violin

Zhu Wang, piano

TRACK LISTING

JEAN SIBELIUS (1865–1957)

Five Pieces, Op. 81 (16:41)

- 1 I. Mazurka (2:58)
- 2 II. Rondino (1:56)
- 3 III. Valse (3:52)
- 4 IV. Aubade (3:02)
- 5 V. Menuetto (4:39)

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)

Violin Sonata (13:54)

- 6 I. Allegro vivo (4:47)
- 7 II. Intermède: Fantasque et léger (4:21)
- 8 III. Finale: Très animé (4:41)

AUGUSTA READ THOMAS (b. 1964)

- 9 Incantation for Solo Violin (5:29)

CYRIL SCOTT (1879–1970) ARR. FRITZ KREISLER (1875–1962)

- 10 Lotus Land (5:10)

GABRIEL FAURÉ (1845–1924)

Violin Sonata No. 1, Op. 13 (26:10)

- 11 I. Allegro molto (9:18)
- 12 II. Andante (6:54)
- 13 III. Scherzo: Allegro vivo (4:10)
14. IV. Finale: Allegro quasi presto (5:36)

Total Duration: 67:51

Produced and engineered by James Ginsburg and Bill Maylone. Recorded November 18–20, 2024, at Mary Patricia Gannon Concert Hall, DePaul University (Chicago, IL).

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