

AMERICAN PORTRAITS

PACIFICA QUARTET
WITH NINA TOTENBERG

CEDILLE

AMERICAN PORTRAITS

PACIFICA
QUARTET
WITH NINA TOTENBERG

SAMUEL BARBER (1910–1981)

String Quartet, Op. 11 (18:54)

- 1 I. Molto allegro e appassionato (8:15)
- 2 II. Molto adagio (8:13)
- 3 III. Molto allegro (2:22)

GABRIELA LENA FRANK (B. 1972)

TEXT BY J. DREW LANHAM

- 4 The Edge of Everything: Elegy for
Rachel Louise Carson* (12:43)

GEORGE WALKER (1922–2018)

- 5 Lyric for Strings (6:12)

JENNIFER HIGDON (B. 1962)

TEXT BY RUTH BADER GINSBURG
PATRICE MICHAELS & JENNIFER HIGDON

- 6 Steps for Justice* (14:41)

GEORGE CRUMB (1929–2022)

Black Angels: Thirteen Images from the Dark Land (19:04)

I. Departure (6:11)

- 7 1. Threnody I: Night of the Electric
Insects (1:35)
- 8 2. Sounds of Bones and Flutes (0:45)
- 9 3. Lost Bells (1:07)
- 10 4. Devil-music (1:35)
- 11 5. Danse Macabre (1:07)

II. Absence (5:19)

- 12 6. Pavana Lachrymae (1:00)
- 13 7. Threnody II: Black Angels! (2:15)
- 14 8. Sarabanda de la Muerte Oscura (0:57)
- 15 9. Lost Bells (Echo) (1:06)

III. Return (7:33)

- 16 10. God-music (3:05)
- 17 11. Ancient Voices (0:32)
- 18 12. Ancient Voices (Echo) (0:30)
- 19 13. Threnody III: Night of the Electric
Insects (3:25)

TT: (72:00)

* NINA TOTENBERG, NARRATOR
WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

SAMUEL BARBER: STRING QUARTET, OP. 11

NOTES BY J. PETER BURKHOLDER

Samuel Barber (1910–1981) composed his String Quartet in 1936 in an Austrian mountain town while in Europe as a fellow of the American Academy in Rome, where the Pro Arte Quartet premiered the work that December. It reflected the influence of Beethoven's late quartets, with an impassioned first movement in sonata form, an ethereal slow movement, and a bright, rollicking finale. Despite several successful performances, Barber grew dissatisfied with the piece. He revised the first movement and replaced the finale with an abbreviated and varied reprise of material from the first movement. The result, premiered and published in 1943, departs from tradition with a circular form that traces an intense emotional journey.

The opening movement's active first theme is suffused with an accented neighbor figure, featured in a rising unison line and then varied in myriad ways amid changing textures. The tranquil second theme, stated in chordal fashion like a hymn, is followed by a quick closing theme that recalls the neighbor figure and changing textures of the first theme. A soft, arching melody over pulsing accompaniment leads to development of the neighbor figure and a series of new episodes. The neighbor figure returns, leading to a varied recapitulation of all three themes.

The second movement is in another world. As the lower instruments sustain slowly changing chords, a melody in the first violin circles around a note, then gradually rises, like a distant cousin of the neighbor figure from the first movement but in an entirely different mood. It moves mostly in notes of the same duration, like a

The second movement is in another world . . . like a plainchant, with no perceptible meter or accent, rising and falling with little sense of phrase or climax . . . there is a sense of suspended time, of a profound emotion that can be expressed in no other way.

plainchant, with no perceptible meter or accent, rising and falling with little sense of phrase or climax. The viola emerges from the texture to take over the melody, then the cello. The intensity gradually increases as all four instruments take turns on the melody, each slowly moving to the top of its range until they peak in a transcendent climax. After a pause, soft, low chords lead to a recollection of the beginning, returning to the circling figure that started it all. Throughout, there is a sense of suspended time, of a profound emotion that can be expressed in no other way. (The day Barber finished this movement, he wrote to a friend that “it is a knockout!”) In 1937, Barber arranged it for string orchestra as the Adagio for Strings, which became his most popular and frequently performed work (including on a nationwide broadcast following President John F. Kennedy’s assassination).

Suddenly, the finale bursts in. The first movement’s initial theme, varied and shortened, leads directly to the soft, arching melody that launched that movement’s development. Almost imperceptibly, this blends into an episode from late in the development. A soft undulation becomes a trill that swells and grows to loud waves of sound, before variants of the accented neighbor figure bring the quartet to a swift and dramatic close.

THE EDGE OF EVERYTHING: ELEGY FOR RACHEL LOUISE CARSON

NOTES BY GABRIELA LENA FRANK

Before she became the woman who changed how the world understood its own fragility, Rachel Louise Carson was a wordsmith whose ear for cadence and image drew readers into the breathing yet imperiled world she loved. Her sea trilogy — *Under the Sea-Wind*, *The Sea Around Us*, and *The Edge of the Sea* — won a National Book Award and made her the foremost science writer in America, lauded for both her rigor and poetic voice. She understood what too many still resist: that the most faithful rendering of the natural world demands both the microscope and the poem.

She was also a woman who had to fight to be heard. Early in her career she signed her articles “R. L. Carson,” obscuring her gender so that readers would take her seriously. When she finally claimed her full name — Rachel Louise Carson — it was an act of defiance as much as identity. J. Drew Lanham captures this moment in his text with the incantatory insistence of her name, a spell against erasure: “Rachel Louise Carson. Rachel. Louise. Carson.”

And then there is the bitter irony of her death. Carson’s *Silent Spring* warned the world that the indiscriminate use of chemical pesticides was poisoning the earth and its inhabitants, including us. She linked these poisons to the slow unraveling of bodies exposed to what industry called progress. She was right, and she was also dying. Breast cancer had metastasized as she wrote, and she hid her illness so that

chemical companies could not weaponize it against her. She wore a wig as she argued before Congress and died in 1964 at the age of 56. She was taken by the very blight she had spent her final years naming.

And then there is the bitter irony of her death. Carson's *Silent Spring* warned the world that the indiscriminate use of chemical pesticides was poisoning the earth and its inhabitants . . . She was right, and she was also dying. Breast cancer had metastasized . . .

I wanted the text for this elegy to come from someone for whom Carson's work was not simply admirable but personally urgent — someone who lives at the intersection of science and poetry, of witness and advocacy. Drew is a MacArthur Fellow, an ornithologist, and the author of *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature*. He is a Black man in America who writes on what it means to love the natural world from a body that the natural world's gatekeepers have not always welcomed. When he channels Rachel Carson's first person in this text — her wonder at tide pools and her fury at poisoned fields — you feel one witness calling across time to another.

In setting Drew's text, I worked as dramaturg alongside my role as composer, shaping the words so that the narrator has dramatic and musical room to inhabit Carson as a character, building from quiet wonder into defiance, especially the

climax where Carson's tireless labor and her cancer converge: "I warned of this. I warned of this! And . . . it found me first." The narrator is a full member of the ensemble, a fifth voice whose silences are as composed as the quartet's, whose breath and timing shape the music.

The quartet, in turn, is no backdrop. In passages where the narrator speaks freely, the quartet answers and comments, yet also falls silent where a word needs space to land. And in the work's most intense pages, the instruments surge forward on their own with their own communicative power.

I write this from the hills of rural northern California, where I live with my husband on land we tend with great care and not a little anxiety. We are in fire country. We have watched neighbors lose homes, watched smoke turn our sky the color of rust, and stored thousand gallons of water against catastrophe. We tend our forest, grow food on terraces, keep chickens, plant native plants and trees, forage and process acorns in the indigenous way, and try to live in some version of the reciprocal relationship with the earth that Carson defended. Her warnings are not academic to me. They are the view from my kitchen window — the drying forests, the unpredictable seasons, the insurance companies fleeing, and above else, the unchecked human appetite.

Drew quotes words that Carson wrote near the end of her life: "It is a wholesome and necessary thing for us to turn again to the earth and in the contemplation of her beauties to know the sense of wonder and humility." She wrote from love — fierce and specific — for a world worth saving. This elegy carries her urgency and her hope. Drew ends the text with her poignant words, "Same air, same water, same soil, same earth, same faith." These are an invocation, a reminder that we share one world and one fate with every creature that breathes, swims, creeps, or flies.

The Edge of Everything was commissioned by the 92nd Street Y in New York and Washington Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. The work's text, by J. Drew Lanham, was commissioned by Ronni LaCroute.

GEORGE WALKER: LYRIC FOR STRINGS

NOTES BY DOMINICK-RENÉ DE LERMA

George Walker (1922–2018) wrote *Lyric for Strings* in 1941 as a memorial to his grandmother. He later incorporated it as the second movement of his First String Quartet (1946). *Lyric* opens with the instruments entering one at a time, establishing the dark warmth of its F-sharp major key. An eloquent melody weaves its way through the different string groups. After a brief interlude of cadential figures, the melody returns and builds to an intense climax. A varied restatement of the theme is again followed by cadential figures that draw this work of remarkable expressiveness and simplicity to a quiet close.

Lyric for Strings exhibits the intense romantic spirit of a composer better known as a neo-classicist. Completely tonal, and as tender and heartfelt as any work in the string orchestra repertoire, the elegiac piece is unique in the composer's output: Dr. Walker has stated that he does not repeat a success.

STEPS FOR JUSTICE

NOTES BY JENNIFER HIGDON

The challenge of creating a musical portrait of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg allowed me to wade into a wealth of available material: a goldmine of wisdom from a lifetime of contemplating the law and how it relates to our humanity. This moment in our history, the founding ideas of personal liberty, freedom, and the empowerment of our fellow citizens, as reflected in her writing, provided the pillars for this piece.

I was fortunate to have several opportunities to talk with the Justice. The first time was at Santa Fe Opera, when she came backstage following a performance of my first opera. I was so awestruck by her graciousness and appreciation for what everyone brought to the performance; her telling me that the music moved her was something I will never forget. Every subsequent meeting evoked the same feeling when we spoke: here was a brilliant, compassionate, and considerate human being.

Every . . . meeting evoked the same feeling when we spoke: here was a brilliant, compassionate, and considerate human being.

There are those individuals who go through life breaking down boundaries and working to make the world better for everyone. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg was one of those angels. The opportunity to honor her, while shining light on those beliefs that she held as the highest hopes for her fellow citizens, is an aspiration that I hope this piece conveys. If it reveals even a glimmer of her brilliance, I will be thrilled.

Texts by Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Patrice Michaels; used with kind permission.

Steps for Justice was commissioned by the 92nd Street Y in New York and Washington Performing Arts for the Fourth Annual Ruth Bader Ginsburg Memorial Concert in Washington, D.C.

The opportunity to honor her, while shining light on those beliefs that she held as the highest hopes for her fellow citizens, is an aspiration that I hope this piece conveys.

BLACK ANGELS: THIRTEEN IMAGES FROM THE DARK LAND

NOTES BY J. PETER BURKHOLDER

In *Black Angels*, George Crumb (1929–2022) upended the string quartet tradition while remaking it for a new age. The violins, viola, and cello are amplified with contact microphones, like electric guitars, while the performers use both traditional and novel techniques, play percussion instruments, make vocalizations, and speak, creating a constantly changing world of unusual colors. It is not a conversation among friends, as string quartets were thought of in the 18th century, but a dramatic showpiece, a nightmare in sounds, hailed at its premiere with a standing ovation.

Written in 1970 and subtitled *Thirteen Images from the Dark Land*, it reflects on the political turbulence of the late 1960s and the war in Vietnam (Crumb marked it “in tempore belli,” in time of war) through imagery of death, grief, the devil, and God. Crumb called it “a kind of parable on our troubled contemporary world” that “portrays a voyage of the soul” in three stages: “Departure (fall from grace), Absence (spiritual annihilation), and Return (redemption).”

Two “fateful numbers” — lucky 7 and unlucky 13 — suffuse the score. There are 13 movements; the 1st, 7th, and 13th are threnodies, songs of mourning; groups of 7 or 13 notes, chords, or gestures appear often; many events are marked to be 7 or 13 seconds in duration; ranging from whispers to shouts, the performers count to 7 in Hungarian, German, French, and Japanese and say “13” in Japanese, Russian, Swahili, and German. Even the harmony is affected: Images 4, 5, and 7, associated

with the devil, feature an extremely dissonant chord combining an open fifth, the interval between adjacent strings on these instruments, with a diminished fifth (the interval dubbed “the devil in music” in the Middle Ages) below it; a fifth spans 7 half-steps, a diminished fifth 6, so the chord’s outer notes span 13 half-steps.

In each section, movements are played without breaks between them, with 13-second pauses between sections. In section I, Departure, Image 1 is “Threnody I: Night of the Electric Insects.” All four performers bow rapidly over the bridge while constantly changing pitch, producing a buzzy, whiny, insect-like sound. New sounds signal Image 2, “Sounds of Bones and Flutes,” with tongue clicks, notes hit with the wood of the bow, plucked glissandos, whispers, and a mysterious melody. Image 3, “Lost Bells,” pairs a bowed tam-tam (flat gong) with delicate cello and violin harmonics and two brief melodies of 13 and 7 notes respectively. In Image 4, “Devil-music,” the first violinist plays a virtuosic, special effect-filled cadenza marked “Vox Diaboli” (voice of the devil) that introduces the dissonant chord mentioned above. This alternates with loud crashes on the tam-tam as violin II and viola play the famous chant, *Dies irae*, from the Catholic Mass for the Dead, moving their bows slowly with great pressure to produce a low, rough sound. Image 5, “Danse Macabre” (dance of death) takes its name from medieval paintings where Death or the devil plays the violin as humans dance to their demise. Pyrotechnics and special effects continue in violin II and viola, alternating with violin I and cello playing *Dies irae* while shaking maracas or whistling.

Section II, Absence, begins with Image 6, “Pavana Lachrymae” (tearful pavane). Here Crumb mixes references to older music, borrowing the title from a mournful 1596 piece by John Dowland and repositioning the instruments to produce the thinner sound of a consort of viols from that era while quoting music from Franz Schubert’s 1817 song (and 1824 string quartet), “Death and the Maiden.” Image 7, “Threnody II: Black Angels!”, marks the work’s climax with energetic bursts of dissonance, trills, glissandos, and sudden changes from loud to soft and back, evoking the winged lost souls of fallen angels that medieval and Renaissance

painters represented as black angels. Image 8, “Sarabanda de la Muerte Oscura” (sarabande of dark death), again invokes the sound of a viol consort, now playing a soft, slow dance. Images 6 and 8 both include recollections of the insect sounds from Image 1, beginning a process of reflection that continues through the rest of the piece. Image 9, “Lost Bells (Echo),” recalls the sounds of Image 3.

Section III, Return, sets a new, calmer mood with Image 10, “God-music.” The violinists and violist play soft tones on crystal glasses tuned with water while the cello sings a slow, elegant aria, marked “Vox Dei” (voice of God), in its high register. In Image 11, “Ancient Voices,” soft, rapid notes in one violin underpin plucked glissandos in the other. The brief Image 12, “Ancient Voices (Echo),” drops the rapid figures and echoes only the plucked glissandos. Image 13, “Threnody I: Night of the Electric Insects,” recalls Image 1 while mixing in other sounds heard along the way: whispered counting, the sarabande (now a distant memory, sounded by tremolos on the strings with thimble-capped fingers), fragments of melody high in the cello, and the bowed tam-tam.

J. Peter Burkholder is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Musicology at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music and author of the four most recent editions of A History of Western Music and Norton Anthology of Western Music. He has served as President of the American Musicological Society, and his scholarship on Charles Ives, modern music, musical borrowing, and music history pedagogy has won numerous awards and been translated into six languages.



PACIFICA QUARTET

SIMIN GANATRA, VIOLIN

MARK HOLLOWAY, VIOLA

AUSTIN HARTMAN, VIOLIN

BRANDON VAMOS, CELLO

With a career spanning more than 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 led 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 and University of Chicago. In 2021, the Pacifica Quartet received its second Grammy Award, for Cedille's *Contemporary Voices*, an exploration of music by three Pulitzer Prize-winning composers: Shulamit Ran, Jennifer Higdon, and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich.

Formed in 1994, the Pacifica Quartet quickly won chamber music's top competitions, including the 1998 Naumburg Chamber Music Award. In 2002, the ensemble was honored with Chamber Music America's Cleveland Quartet Award and appointment to Lincoln Center's The Bowers Program (formerly CMS Two) and, in 2006, was awarded a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant. With its powerful energy and captivating, cohesive sound, Pacifica has established itself as the embodiment of the senior American quartet sound.

The members of the Pacifica Quartet live in Bloomington, IN, where they serve as quartet-in-residence and full-time faculty members at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music. Prior to that appointment, the Quartet was on the faculty of the University of Illinois at Champaign Urbana from 2003 to 2012, and also served as resident performing artist at the University of Chicago for 17 years.

PacificaQuartet.com



NINA TOTENBERG

Nina Totenberg is NPR's award-winning legal affairs correspondent. Her reports air regularly on NPR's critically acclaimed newsmagazines *All Things Considered*, *Morning Edition*, and *Weekend Edition*.

Totenberg's coverage of the Supreme Court and legal affairs has won

her widespread recognition. She is often featured in documentaries — most recently *RBG* — that deal with issues before the court. As *Newsweek* put it, NPR's "mainstays are *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*. But the crème de la crème is Nina Totenberg."

In 1991, her ground-breaking report about University of Oklahoma Law Professor Anita Hill's allegations of sexual harassment by Judge Clarence Thomas led the Senate Judiciary Committee to re-open Thomas's Supreme Court confirmation hearings to consider Hill's charges. NPR received the prestigious George Foster Peabody Award for its gavel-to-gavel coverage — anchored by Totenberg — of both the original hearings and the inquiry into Anita Hill's allegations, and for Totenberg's reports and exclusive interview with Hill.

That same coverage earned Totenberg additional awards, including the Long Island University George Polk Award for excellence in journalism; the Sigma Delta Chi Award from the Society of Professional Journalists for investigative reporting;

NPR's mainstays are *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*. But the crème de la crème is Nina Totenberg.

the Carr Van Ande Award from the Scripps School of Journalism; and the prestigious Joan S. Barone Award for excellence in Washington-based national affairs/public policy reporting, which also acknowledged her coverage of Justice Thurgood Marshall's retirement.

Totenberg was named Broadcaster of the Year and honored with the 1998 Sol Taishoff Award for Excellence in Broadcasting from the National Press Foundation. She is the first radio journalist to receive the award. She is also the recipient of the American Judicature Society's first-ever award honoring a career body of work in the field of journalism and the law. In 1988, Totenberg won the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Silver Baton for her coverage of Supreme Court nominations.

Totenberg has been honored seven times by the American Bar Association for continued excellence in legal reporting and has received more than two dozen honorary degrees. She is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller, *Dinners with Ruth: A Memoir on the Power of Friendships*.

A frequent contributor on TV shows, Totenberg has also written for major newspapers and periodicals including *The New York Times Magazine*, *Harvard Law Review*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and *New York Magazine*, among others.

Producer James Ginsburg

Engineer Bill Maylone

Crumb editing Jeanne Velonis

Recorded

January 18 and May 5–6, 2026, Auer Hall at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music
April 24, 2026, NPR Studios, Washington, DC (narrations)

Publishers

Samuel Barber

String Quartet ©1943 G. Schirmer, Inc.

Gabriela Lena Frank

The Edge of Everything: Elegy for Rachel Louise Carson ©2026 G. Schirmer, Inc.

George Walker

Lyric for Strings from String Quartet No. 2 ©1946 George Walker,
assigned 2008 to Lauren Keiser Music Publishing

Jennifer Higdon

Steps for Justice ©2025 Jennifer Higdon (Lawdon Press)

George Crumb

Black Angels ©1971 C.F. Peters Corporation

Cover Photo Ansel Adams, *The Tetons and the Snake River* (1942)

Graphic Design Bark Design

Cedille Records is a trademark of Cedille Chicago, NFP, a not-for-profit organization devoted to promoting the finest musicians and ensembles in the Chicago area. Cedille Chicago's activities are supported in part by contributions and grants from individuals, foundations, corporations, and government agencies including The Negaunee Foundation, Sage Foundation, Irving Harris Foundation, and the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency. This project is partially supported by a CityArts Grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events.



Illinois
ARTS
Council

Contributions to Cedille Chicago may be made at cedillerecords.org or 773.989.2515
CDR 90000 246 © & © 2026 CEDILLE RECORDS,
trademark of Cedille Chicago, NFP
4311 N Ravenswood Ave., Suite 209, Chicago IL 60613 USA
773.989.2515 tel • 773.989.2517 fax
CedilleRecords.org

CEDILLE PRODUCERS CIRCLE

Honoring the generosity and loyalty of those individuals and foundations
who have supported our recordings through their repeated,
major annual gifts to Cedille Chicago

Anonymous
Douglas G. Baird
Constance P. Beaty
Beech Street Foundation
Barbara and Frank Easterbrook
Marian and M. Carr Ferguson
Frances and Henry Fogel
Kent S. Dymak and Theodore N. Foss
Sue and Paul Freehling
Janet Gilboy and John Schmidt
Jane Ginsburg and George Spera
Barbara Greis and Howard Gottlieb
Irving Harris Foundation
Barbara Haws and William Josephson
The Julian Family Foundation
Barbara Julius and Marc Silberberg
Patricia Kenney and Gregory O'Leary
Rebecca and Arnie Klein
Christine and Bill Landuyt
Eva Lichtenberg and Arnold Tobin
Priscilla Ruth MacDougall

Kay Mabie
Judy and Scott McCue
Graci and Dennis McGillicuddy
Bonnie McGrath and Bruce Oltman
Mesirow Financial
Ginger and Jim Meyer
Patrice Michaels and James Ginsburg
The Negaunee Foundation
Kathleen Peratis
Rachel Barton Pine and Gregory Pine
Pumpkin Foundation/ Joe Reich
Jim Rogers
Beverly and Bill Rosoff
Sage Foundation
Sybil Shainwald
Laraine and David Spector
Claire and Edward Stiepleman
Peggy and Gene Wedoff
Eileen and David Zampa
Jia Zhao and Hongyi Chen