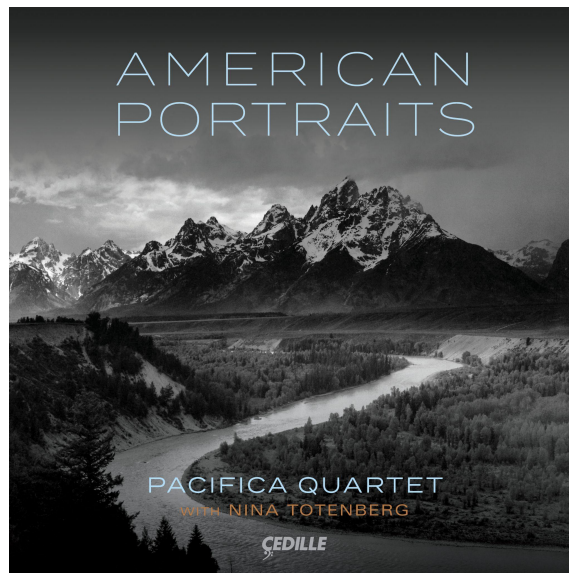


For Immediate Release



CEDILLE RECORDS RELEASES THE PACIFICA QUARTET'S *AMERICAN PORTRAITS*, FEATURING WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS OF WORKS BY GABRIELA LENA FRANK & JENNIFER HIGDON, OCTOBER 9



NPR legal affairs correspondent Nina Totenberg narrates on both of the new works

American Portraits completes the Quartet's three-part recording series, The American Collection, with the complete trilogy set for release as a boxed set on November 20, 2026

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS (SEPTEMBER 10, 2026) — On Friday, October 9, Cedille Records will release the multiple Grammy Award-winning **Pacifica Quartet's** *American Portraits*. Bringing together touchstones of the American repertoire, the album features some of the most canonical American chamber works, including **Samuel Barber's** *String Quartet, Op. 11*, **George Walker's** *Lyric for Strings*, and **George Crumb's** *Black Angels: Thirteen Images from the Dark Land*. The album also spotlights world premiere recordings of two newly commissioned works: 2026 Pulitzer Prize winner **Gabriela Lena Frank's** *The Edge of Everything: Elegy for Rachel Louise Carson*, a tribute to the environmental pioneer, and 2010 Pulitzer Prize and three-time Grammy Award winner **Jennifer Higdon's** *Steps for Justice*, a portrait of Justice **Ruth Bader Ginsburg**. Both works feature narration by NPR legal affairs correspondent **Nina Totenberg**. As a collection,

the works explore a breadth of the American experience and celebrate enduring compositions from the American chamber music canon.

American Portraits opens with **Samuel Barber's** 1936 *String Quartet, Op. 11*, composed while he was a fellow at the American Academy in Rome. Written during this period of study in Europe, the work offers an early portrait of the distinctly American voice Barber cultivated throughout his career, balancing expansive lyricism with moments of dramatic intensity. The piece features the original, four-string version of Barber's celebrated *Adagio for Strings*, one of the most celebrated works in the American repertoire.

Reflecting on the life and legacy of American marine biologist and writer **Rachel Louise Carson**, **Gabriela Lena Frank** composed *The Edge of Everything: Elegy for Rachel Louise Carson*. Frank's work traces the emotional and historical arc of Carson's life through themes of environmental stewardship, justice, memory, and resilience.

Known for her "sea trilogy"— *Under the Sea-Wind*, *The Sea Around Us*, and *The Edge of the Sea* — Carson became one of America's foremost science writers, winning a National Book Award for *The Sea Around Us*. She published much of her early work under the name "R. L. Carson," navigating the barriers women scientists faced in establishing their authority in a male-dominated field. Her eventual embrace of her full name became an act of reclamation and self-definition. Further embodying Carson's legacy, Frank's work features text written by MacArthur Fellow, ornithologist, and author **J. Drew Lanham**, narrated by NPR legal affairs correspondent **Nina Totenberg**. A Black American who has written extensively about loving a world from a body that the natural world's gatekeepers have not always welcomed, Lanham's words bring the authority of a working scientist and the voice of a poet to this work channeling Carson's enduring legacy.

The Quartet provides what Frank calls the elegy's emotional undertow, "the tidal pull that runs beneath Carson's words." Conceived with the narrator as a fifth voice in the ensemble, the five voices move "with, against, between, and in spite of one another," sharing wonder at the natural world, noting humanity's responsibility to it, and mourning its calamitous changes.

Written in memory of his grandmother, who escaped slavery and remained one of the most important figures in his life, **George Walker's** *Lyric for Strings* is a deeply expressive work of the American string repertoire. Drawing on Walker's personal history, the work provides a moment of profound reflection at the center of the album.

Jennifer Higdon's *Steps for Justice* sets texts by Supreme Court Justice **Ruth Bader Ginsburg**, her daughter-in-law **Patrice Michaels**, and Higdon herself. Commissioned by 92Y in New York and Washington Performing Arts for its Fourth Annual Ruth Bader Ginsburg Memorial Concert in Washington, D.C. in April 2026, the work features **Nina Totenberg**, a longtime friend of Ginsburg's, as narrator, bringing Ginsburg's beliefs in equality, compassion, and shared humanity to the forefront.

Higdon remarks, "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.”

The album closes with **George Crumb's** *Black Angels: Thirteen Images from the Dark Land*, one of the most influential American chamber works of the 20th century. Written in the 1970s, the work reflects on the political turbulence of the late 1960s and the war in Vietnam. Comprising 13 interconnected movements, a number that permeates the score as a symbolic motif, the work transforms the traditional string quartet through amplification, percussion, vocalizations, and extended techniques, resulting in a haunting meditation on war, spirituality, and the journey from despair to redemption.

American Portraits marks Pacifica Quartet's 18th release with Cedille Records, following the Grammy-nominated *American Stories* (2022) and *American Voices* (2024). A reflection of the ensemble's longstanding commitment to American music and adventurous programming, *American Portraits* completes the Quartet's three-part recording series, *The American Collection*, with the complete trilogy set for release as a boxed set on **November 20, 2026**.

"We're thrilled to share *American Portraits*, the culmination of a recording project that has been incredibly meaningful to us. Bringing these remarkable musical voices together has been a joyful and inspiring journey, and we can't wait for listeners to experience this music!"

- The Pacifica Quartet

ABOUT PACIFICA QUARTET

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

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 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, received 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

ABOUT 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."

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.

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 not only in the recordings but also in the artists represented on them. The label's catalog of more than 240 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 programs. 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 about Cedille Records and explore the label's catalog at cedillerecords.org.

AMERICAN PORTRAITS

Cedille Records CDR 90000 246

Pacifica Quartet

Simin Ganatra, violin
Austin Hartman, violin
Mark Holloway, viola
Brandon Vamos, cello
with Nina Totenberg, narrator

SAMUEL BARBER

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

TEXT BY J. DREW LANHAM

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

GEORGE WALKER

- 5 Lyric for Strings (6:12)

JENNIFER HIGDON

TEXT BY RUTH BADER GINSBURG

PATRICE MICHAELS & JENNIFER HIGDON

- 6 Steps for Justice* (14:41)

GEORGE CRUMB

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

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