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News

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Lincoln Trio Revives Rarities by Revered Chicago Composers June 11 on Cedille Records

**On ‘Trios from the City of Big Shoulders’
Grammy-nominated ensemble plays works
by Ernst Bacon and Leo Sowerby**

**Album features world-premiere recording
of Bacon’s Trio No. 2 with Sowerby’s
seldom-heard late piano trio**

The Chicago-based Lincoln Trio — violinist Desirée Ruhstrat, cellist David Cunliffe, and pianist Marta Aznavoorian — offers large-scale, late-career piano trios by 20th-century Chicago masters: Ernst Bacon, recipient of three Guggenheim Fellowships and a Pulitzer Fellowship, and Leo Sowerby, first recipient of the Rome Prize (1921) and winner of a Pulitzer Prize for music (1946), on the group’s new Cedille Records album, *Trios from the City of Big Shoulders*, available June 11, 2021.

Praised as “models of vibrancy and control” (*Gramophone*), the twice Grammy-nominated ensemble performs the world-premiere recording of Bacon’s Trio No. 2 for Violin, Cello and Piano, from 1987, paired with the second-ever recording of Sowerby’s 1953 Trio for violin, violincello and pianoforte, H312 (Cedille Records CDR 90000 203).

The album takes its title from the Carl Sandburg poem that immortalized Chicago as the “City of the Big Shoulders.”

Discoveries Close to Home

“Ever since the Lincoln Trio was founded, we’ve made it our mission to champion new and lesser-known works,” Ruhstrat says, pointing to their Cedille albums of music by living American women composers, chamber gems by Joaquín Turina, and trios by composers from their ancestral homelands of Switzerland, England, and Armenia.

“Our ensemble was formed in Chicago, so we decided to see what we could discover in our own backyard,” she says. “We found these wonderful yet neglected works that deserve a wider audience.”

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Aznavoorian describes the Bacon and Sowerby trios as “monumental and intense, written by two strong, unique, Chicago composers both driven by their love for America and the American Spirit.”
“Echoing America”

Hailed by *The New York Times* as “a Composer Known for Echoing America,” Bacon (1898–1990) infused his late, six-movement Piano Trio No. 2 with American influences including marches, folksong-like melodies, and jazz rhythms, validating composer and critic Virgil Thomson’s assessment of Bacon’s music as “full of melody and variety; honest and skillful and beautiful.”

Cunliffe says performers and audiences alike find themselves captivated by Bacon’s “beautiful, soaring melodies.”

Bacon is best remembered for his vast output of vocal music, including hundreds of art songs. Cunliffe says the composer’s lyricism is on full display in the Trio’s third movement, primarily a cello melody, marked “as if gently singing.”

“There is something for everyone in this work,” he says. “Not surprisingly, I am particularly fond of the third movement.”

Symphonic Scope

Sowerby (1895–1968) has been called part of the “forgotten vanguard” of 20th-century composers, observes Northern Illinois University music professor Elinor Olin in the album’s liner notes. Once “accused by right-wingers of being too dissonant and cacophonous, and by leftists of being old-fashioned and derivative,” Sowerby’s “exquisitely crafted music” is long overdue for revival, Olin argues.

Sowerby’s Trio for violin, violincello and pianoforte is “a work of tremendous integrity” that exhibits an “imposing structure, contrapuntal gymnastics, and a concern for instruments sounding as good as they can” (*Classical Net*).

Aznavoorian says “Sowerby brings a symphonic scope to this composition. At times, he feels two staves in the piano part are not enough, so he adds a third.”

Sometimes virtuosic, sometimes reflective, the work is distinguished by an ever-evolving rhythmic and harmonic interplay between instruments.

“Sowerby has his own unique harmonic language,” Aznavoorian says. “His harmonies are rich yet modern, and they support what he does structurally.”

Recording Team

Trios from the City of Big Shoulders was recorded by the Grammy Award-winning team of producer James Ginsburg and engineer Bill Maylone June 29–July 1, 2020, in the Murray and Michele Allen Recital Hall, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.

Lincoln Trio on Cedille Records

Trios from the City of Big Shoulders is the Lincoln Trio's fourth Cedille Records album. The ensemble's *Trios from Our Homelands* earned a Grammy nomination for Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance. *Gramophone* admired "the poetry of their playing." The *Observer* praised the ensemble's "shapely and impassioned performances." ClassicsToday.com applauded their *Turina Chamber Music for Strings and Piano* as "a real bonanza for chamber music lovers . . . expertly played with passion and precision." The trio's debut album, *Notable Women*, "takes the listener on a musical journey full of energy, vigor, and excellent timing" (AllMusic.com).

The Lincoln Trio also performed on the Grammy-nominated Naxos recording of James Whitbourn's *Annelies*.

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.

Cedille has recorded more than 180 Chicago artists and ensembles, with more than 80 making their professional recording debuts on the label. Its catalog includes the world premieres of more than 300 classical compositions.

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.

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Trios from the City of Big Shoulders
Lincoln Trio
(Cedille Records CDR 90000 203)

Ernst Bacon: Trio No. 2 for Violin, Cello and Piano (31:15)
Leo Sowerby: Trio for violin, violoncello and pianoforte (H312) (37:02)