

Cedille Records  
5255 N. Lakewood Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60640  
(773) 989-2515  
www.cedillerecords.org

Press contact: Nat Silverman  
Nathan J. Silverman Co./PR  
1830 Sherman Ave., Suite 401  
Evanston, IL 60201-3773  
Phone (847) 328-4292  
Fax (847) 328-4317  
Email: natsilv@aol.com

# News

For Release: May 2004

---

## EIGHTH BLACKBIRD CONTEMPLATES COSMIC ORIGINS ON NEW CD

*beginnings* Opens with Premiere  
Of Kellogg's *Divinum Mysterium*,  
Closes with Crumb's *Vox Balaenae*

Celebrated new-music ensemble eighth blackbird (spelled lower case) performs a provocative pairing of works evoking the origins of the universe on *beginnings*, its new CD for Cedille Records (Cedille Records CDR 90000 076).

The pioneering sextet offers the world-premiere recording of Daniel Kellogg's *Divinum Mysterium*, a new work inspired by a medieval Latin chant, and George Crumb's venerable *Vox Balaenae* (*Voice of the Whale*), inspired by sounds of the humpback whale. Producer-engineer is Grammy Award-winner Judith Sherman.

"Both pieces celebrate the fact that we live, that the universe does exist," the ensemble writes in the CD booklet. Both move from the violence of creation "to joyful celebration and tender contemplation."

Formed at Oberlin Conservatory in 1996, eighth blackbird is flutist Molly Alicia Barth, clarinetist Michael J. Maccaferri, violinist Matt Albert, cellist Nicholas Photinos, percussionist Matthew Duvall, and pianist Lisa Kaplan.

Kellogg, born in 1976, is a much-honored young composer based in New Haven, Conn. He drew on his religious faith and church liturgy for *Divinum Mysterium* (2000): specifically, the medieval Christmas plainsong hymn, "Of the Father's Love Begotten," based on text by the fourth-century Christian Latin poet Prudentius. Kellogg writes that singing the hymn in his family church, accompanied only by tonic bells between the phrases, remains "one of the most

beautiful and striking experiences in my musical memory. . . . I felt connected to the people of ancient times.”

*Divinum Mysterium* opens with a Prelude usually chanted by the instrumentalists. On the recording, it’s sung by guest artist Chanticleer, the acclaimed male vocal ensemble from San Francisco. Subsequent movements — variations on the plainchant — trace the creation narrative of Genesis.

*Newsday* critic Justin Davidson called *Divinum Mysterium* “an ambitious, wordlessly religious piece, which . . . has a way of tugging at the ear, demanding the listener’s concentrated attention.” He called it “a combination of mysticism and muscle.” The piece earned Kellogg the 2001 ASCAP Foundation Morton Gould Young Composers Award.

The sextet met Kellogg at the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival in 1997, and the chemistry between the young composer and young players was immediate. With a grant from Meet the Composer, eighth blackbird commissioned him to write a piece for the full ensemble. *Divinum Mysterium* received its world premiere October 3, 2000, at Columbia University’s Miller Theater on an eighth blackbird concert that also included Crumb’s *Vox Balaenae* (1971).

Most members of eighth blackbird first heard *Vox Balaenae* at a faculty recital at Oberlin, violinist Matt Albert recalled in a pre-release interview. “It kind of lodged itself in our memory. It’s striking, beautiful, and amazing.” They first performed it in March 2000 at a Mexico City music festival attended by the composer.

Crumb, born in 1929 and winner of a Pulitzer Prize and a Grammy Award, calls *Vox Balaenae* “an abstract piece of nature music” and “an evocation of nature, using artistic license.”

Scored for electric flute, electric cello, and electric piano, the work unfolds in three sections: an opening Vocalise, a Sea Theme followed by variations named for geologic eras, and a Sea-Nocturne suggesting what Crumb calls “a larger rhythm of nature and a sense of suspension in time.”

The work requires unusual playing techniques as the musicians expand their musical color palette, coaxing exotic, otherworldly sounds from their instruments: almost-human wails

and ululations interwoven with Middle Eastern-tinged flute passages in the opening Vocalise; Indian sitar sounds in the Proterozoic movement; and a flurry of shimmering, cascading dissonances in the Mesozoic movement.

In residence at the University of Richmond in Virginia and the University of Chicago, eighth blackbird has garnered prestigious engagements, glowing reviews, and competition victories, including the 2000 Naumburg Chamber Music Award.

The ensemble's first CD for Cedille, *Thirteen Ways*, was released in spring 2003 and included works by Joan Tower, George Perle, David Schober, and Thomas Albert (Cedille CDR 90000 067).

Their third Cedille CD, scheduled for spring 2005 release, will present three works by Frederic Rzewski: *Pocket Symphony*, *Coming Together*, and *Les moutons de Panurge*.

Cedille Records (pronounced say-DEE) is dedicated to showcasing the most noteworthy classical artists in and from Chicago. The nonprofit label is an arm of The Chicago Classical Recording Foundation.

For a free catalog and the locations of local retail outlets, consumers are invited to contact Cedille Records, 5255 N. Lakewood Ave., Chicago, IL 60640-2220, call (773) 989-2515; E-mail: [info@cedillerecords.org](mailto:info@cedillerecords.org); [www.cedillerecords.org](http://www.cedillerecords.org).

###

*beginnings*

(Cedille Records CDR 90000 076)

Daniel Kellogg: *Divinum Mysterium*\* (2000) (33:37)

George Crumb: *Vox Balaenae* (1971) (22:28)

**eighth blackbird**

**\*with guest artist Chanticleer**