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News

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CAVATINA DUO DEBUTS WORKS FOR FLUTE AND GUITAR BY DAVID LEISNER

With Their New CD *Acrobats*, Agile Artists
Eugenia Moliner and Denis Azabagic
Join Cedille Records Roster

The Chicago-based Cavatina Duo makes its Cedille Records debut with the first complete survey of contemporary American composer David Leisner's works for flute and guitar, all written between 1982 and 2002.

Acrobats: Music of David Leisner includes world-premiere recordings of Leisner's *Acrobats*, *Trittico*, and *Extremes*, plus performances of *El Coco* (The Bogeyman), *Nostalgia*, and *Dances in the Madhouse* (Cedille Records CDR 90000 096).

The *Los Angeles Times* called *Dances in the Madhouse* "a potent addition to the repertory — giddy, attractive reinterpretations of traditional forms." *Guitar Review* called it a work of "exquisite beauty" and proof that "a composer needn't sacrifice originality and quality for accessibility."

"These assessments of David Leisner's most celebrated work could apply to all the pieces on this CD," says James Ginsburg, Cedille Records founder and president and the recording's producer.

The program consists of four duos and two trios. For the latter works, the Cavatina Duo — Spanish-born flutist Eugenia Moliner and Bosnian-born guitarist Denis Azabagic — are joined by cellist Katinka Kleijn of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and clarinetist Joshua Rubin, a founding member of the International Contemporary Ensemble and a member of the New York Miniaturist Ensemble.

Acrobats (2002) was inspired by a gripping and darkly humorous short story by Nathan Englander. A group of World War II Polish Jews bound for a Nazi extermination camp inadvertently

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board a traveling circus train, where they are mistaken for performers. Either they develop a credible act before their first show or face certain death. “The piece is not intended to be a narrative description of these moments,” Leisner writes in the CD program notes, “but rather an imagined evocation of the inner mental and emotional activity during them.”

Leisner based *El Coco* (The Bogeyman) on a Francisco Goya print depicting a cloaked and hooded apparition menacing two frightened little girls who cling to their mother. *El Coco* (1999) is a passacaglia whose recurrent bass theme, primarily in the guitar, represents the bogeyman. The flute, as the children, is heard in “nervous little fragments” that eventually “coalesce into the strong, long-lined melody of the protective mother,” Leisner writes.

Nostalgia (1985) began life as the third movement of Leisner’s Sonata for violin and guitar. “It is, by turns, cozy, passionate, sweet, and, of course, nostalgic,” says Leisner.

The inspiration for *Dances in the Madhouse* (1982) was an early 20th-century lithograph, “Dance in the Madhouse,” by American artist George Bellows. The drawing depicts four groups of asylum patients at a social dance. Leisner wrote dance movements to suit their individual characters — a tango, waltz, ballad, and samba.

With its three movements, *Trittico* (1985, Rev. 2002) for flute, cello, and guitar mirrors the physical structure of a triptych, a three-panel painting common in the Renaissance period, with small outer panels flanking a large central panel. Leisner describes the central movement as “an emotionally elaborate rhapsody, with solo passages for both cello and guitar, while the outer movements are light and airy.”

Extremes (1987) for flute, clarinet, and guitar is a study in contrasting personality types. The “introverted” first movement is “chromatic and dark and constantly turns in on itself, in both melody and gesture,” Leisner writes. The “extroverted” second movement is “wide-open, emotionally as well as harmonically” and conveys “the energy and rhythmic intensity of rock music.”

David Leisner’s music has been performed worldwide by artists and ensembles that include, among others, Eugenia Zuckerman, The St. Lawrence String Quartet, and Los Angeles Guitar Quartet. His music has been recorded on Sony Classical, Centaur, Barking Dog, and other labels. He has received composition grants from the American Music Center, Alice M. Dutson Fund, New England Foundation for the Arts, and Meet the Composer. As a guitarist, he has recorded for the

Azica, Etcetera, Koch, Naxos, and Telarc labels. Though primarily self-taught as a composer and guitarist, he studied briefly with David Starobin, David Del Tredici, and Virgil Thomson, among others. He taught for 22 years at the New England Conservatory and is presently co-chair of the guitar department at the Manhattan School of Music. (See: www.davidleisner.com.)

Cavatina Duo members Eugenia Moliner and her husband Denis Azabagic first met as students at the Rotterdam Conservatory in 1991. Since winning the “Young Musicians of the Doelen” competition in 1996, the flute and guitar duo has performed at chamber music festivals across Europe and the United States. The duo is known for its commitment to original repertoire. *The British Flute Society Magazine* said, “The energy levels behind these brilliant musicians are breathtaking and fascinating.” *Classical Guitar* praised their “excellent technical control and convincing intensity.” (See: www.cavatina duo.com)

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, contact Cedille Records, 5255 N. Lakewood Ave., Chicago, IL 60640-2220, call (773) 989-2515; E-mail: info@cedillerecords.org. On the Net: www.cedillerecords.org. Cedille Records is distributed by Allegro Corporation in the U.S. and Canada.

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Acrobats: Music of David Leisner
Cedille Records 90000 096

Acrobats (2002) (12:48)
El Coco (1999) (3:27)
Nostalgia (1985) (5:55)
Dances in the Madhouse (1982) (12:13)
Trittico (1985, rev. 2002) (12:38)
Extremes (1987) (12:30)

Cavatina Duo
(Eugenia Moliner, flute; Denis Azabagic, guitar)
with
Katinka Kleijn, cello
Joshua Rubin, clarinet