

Cedille Records
1205 W. Balmoral Ave.
Chicago, IL 60640
(773) 989-2515
www.cedillerecords.org

Press contact: Nat Silverman
Nathan J. Silverman Co. PR
2906 Central St. #250
Evanston, IL 60201-1283
Phone: (847) 868-1417
Email: natsilv@aol.com

News

Recording release date: July 9, 2021

David Schrader Plays Organ Works by Frank Ferko and Leo Sowerby on Cedille Records July 9

Performed on notable instruments in St. Paul, Minn.,
and Chicago, new album features world-premiere
recordings of eight Ferko compositions,
plus Sowerby standards and rarities

Digital versions include first-ever recording
of Sowerby's late 'Two Sketches'

Versatile Chicago keyboard artist David Schrader, heard on more than two dozen Cedille Records albums, performs 20th- and 21st-century solo organ works by Frank Ferko and Leo Sowerby, prolific composers known for their organ mastery and strongly associated with the city of Chicago, on a new album due July 9, 2021, on Cedille Records.

Organ Music by Frank Ferko & Leo Sowerby is a two-CD set with a 24-page program booklet, priced as a single disc (Cedille Records CDR 90000 204).

The Ferko works, all world-premiere recordings, are heard on three different mechanical-action organs at House of Hope Presbyterian Church, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Ferko, who attended the St. Paul sessions, writes in the liner notes that House of Hope “provided a variety of organ designs and tonal palette that is well suited for these pieces.”

The intimate *Music for Elizabeth Chapel* is performed on the organ it was written for: the 19-rank Jaeckel, Opus 41, built in 2001 and revised in 2005. *Variations on a Hungarian Folk Theme*, also written for the textures and colors of a small instrument, is heard on an authentic Romantic-era French organ of 13 ranks, built by Joseph Merklin in 1878 for a church in southern France. It was restored by C.B. Fisk Inc. and installed at House of Hope in 1987.

Ferko compositions performed on the 97-rank C.B. Fisk Opus 78 (1979) include *Variations on “Veni Creator Spiritus,”* based on a ninth-century plainsong hymn; *Angels — Chaconne for Organ, Missa O Ecclesia: Communion*, and *Mass for Dedication*, all based on chants by 12th-century abbess, composer, and Christian mystic Hildegard von Bingen; *Symphonie brève*, dedicated to Schrader; and *Tired Old Nun*, a novelty piece scored for pedals alone, with waltz, slow blues, and boogie variations.

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Among his many credits, Ferko (b. 1950) has received commissions from the American Guild of Organists for new works premiered at its national conventions in 2006 and 2018. His choral music has been performed at national conventions of the American Choral Directors Association and Chorus America. From 2001–2003, Ferko was composer-in-residence with the Dale Warland Singers.

Sowerby Staples and Surprises

Schrader offers his Sowerby program on the 68-rank Wicks Opus 2918 organ at St. Ita Catholic Church, Chicago, completed in 1951 and renovated in 2003 by H.A. Howell. Like the great Skinner organs that Sowerby knew well, it includes a Solo division with stops that are essential to performing the composer's large-scale works.

Repertoire includes some of Sowerby's best-known organ music: the brilliant program overture *Comes Autumn Time*; the virtuosic *Pageant*, championed by Virgil Fox; Toccata, a recital staple for generations of American organists; and the monumental Symphony in G major, first recorded in 1942 by British organist E. Power Biggs for RCA Victor. Schrader includes a Sowerby rarity, the March from *Suite for Organ*.

Digital editions of the album also include the world-premiere recording of Sowerby's late *Two Sketches*, H 393, composed in 1963. "Nostalgic" conjures Sowerby's sensuous, atmospheric organ tone paintings that began with his *Madrigal* of 1915. "Fancy-Free" has been described as a free-wheeling, 1920s-era "Waltonesque romp."

Sowerby (1895–1968) was the first recipient of the Rome Prize (1921) and won the Pulitzer Prize for music in 1946 for his oratorio, *The Canticle of the Sun*. In 1962, Sowerby retired from his prominent church music and conservatory posts in Chicago to serve as founding director of the College of Church Musicians at Washington National Cathedral, Washington, D.C.

Recording Team

Organ Music by Frank Ferko & Leo Sowerby was recorded by the Grammy Award-winning team of producer James Ginsburg and engineer Bill Maylone August 24–26, 2019, in St. Paul, and August 17–20, 2020, in Chicago.

David Schrader on Cedille Records

This is Schrader's 26th Cedille Records album. His discography includes critically acclaimed recordings on harpsichord and fortepiano as well as organ. He recorded his first organ album for Cedille in 1991, a disc consisting of J. S. Bach's complete toccatas and fugues and Prelude & Fugue in E minor. Schrader has appeared with the Chicago, Colorado, Dallas, and San Francisco Symphonies; as soloist at four national conventions of the American Guild of Organists; and at a host of prestigious festivals. For thirty-five years he was organist for Chicago's Church of the Ascension. Schrader recently retired as a long-serving music professor on the faculty of Roosevelt University's Chicago College of the Performing Arts.

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.

Cedille's headquarters are at 1205 W. Balmoral Ave., Chicago, IL 60640; call 773-989-2515; email: info@cedillerecords.org. Website: cedillerecords.org.

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Organ Music by Frank Ferko & Leo Sowerby
David Schrader, organ
(Cedille Records CDR 90000 204)

Disc 1

Frank Ferko:

Music for Elizabeth Chapel (20:37)*
Variations on "Veni Creator Spiritus" (11:11)*
Angels — Chaconne for Organ (8:43)*
Symphonie brève (12:35)*
Missa O Ecclesia: Communion (2:32)*
Variations on a Hungarian Folk Tune (3:27)*
Tired Old Nun (6:09)*
Mass for Dedication (13:26)*

Disc 2

Leo Sowerby:

Comes Autumn Time (6:39)
Pageant (12:21)
Toccatà (7:59)
March from Suite for Organ (9:31)
Symphony in G major (42:05)

Available as additional tracks
in online versions of the album:

Two Sketches H 393 (8:21)*
Nostalgic (4.26)
Fancy-Free (3:53)

*World premiere recording