

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: April 2003

EIGHTH BLACKBIRD MAKES CD DEBUT

Celebrated Ensemble's First Commercial Release Shows Why Critics Are Raving About this New-Music Sextet

The celebrated young ensemble eighth blackbird (spelled lower case) has garnered a remarkable string of consistently stellar concert reviews. Now the group makes its commercial recording debut with *Thirteen Ways* (Cedille Records CDR 90000 067).

On *Thirteen Ways*, the first of three discs planned for release on Cedille, the new-music sextet performs Joan Tower's *Petroushkates* (arranged by Allen Otte); George Perle's *Critical Moments 2*; David Schober's *Variations*; and Thomas Albert's *Thirteen Ways*. All are world-premiere recordings. Producer is Grammy award-winner Judith Sherman.

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

For *Thirteen Ways*, eighth blackbird chose works by contemporary composers of different generations that illustrate "the spectrum of compositional possibility," according to the CD notes. Though stylistically extremely varied, all the pieces share an intimate sound world especially well suited to the privacy of CD listening.

Tower (b. 1938) is at the forefront of today's contemporary music scene. Her sparkling *Petroushkates* (1980) is a vibrant homage to Stravinsky, inspired by her fascination with the seamless movement of figure skaters. The sextet version of this shimmering sonic world incorporates a percussion part written for eighth blackbird by Allen Otte, a friend and mentor.

Perle (b. 1915), a Pulitzer Prize-winner, invented a Schoenberg-inspired musical language he calls "12-tone tonality." *Critical Moments 2* (2001), commissioned for eighth

blackbird by the Naumburg Foundation, is “remarkably fresh in its spiky crystalline fragments, rapid atonal flurries and muted wisps of sound,” the *Los Angeles Times* reported. Perle says each of the “nine short, self-contained, and strikingly individual movements . . . has its own ‘expression.’”

An emerging composer who has already won significant commissions, Schober (b. 1974) has received an Aaron Copland Award and a Charles Ives Scholarship, among other honors. His elegantly crafted *Variations* (1998), by turns ethereal and insistent, won him the 1999 Wayne Peterson Prize from San Francisco State University.

Thomas Albert (b. 1948) of Shenandoah University has received commissions from the University of Cincinnati and Washington D.C.’s 20th Century Consort. His works have been performed and recorded by Philadelphia’s Relâche Ensemble.

Albert’s kaleidoscopic *Thirteen Ways* (1997), eighth blackbird’s signature piece, is as evocative and stimulating as the poem that it inspired it: Wallace Stevens’s “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” (complete text included in the CD notes). The ensemble takes its name from the poem’s eighth stanza. The piece also has a family connection: violinist Matt is composer Thomas’s son.

“All of these works are modern in the best sense of the word — fun, fresh, and exhilarating,” James Ginsburg, Cedille Records president says. “This program will appeal to an audience well beyond the goatee and black-turtleneck set.”

The CD’s inventive, 18-page booklet provides insights into the ensemble members, as well as the composers and their works. The notes for each piece open with a capsule bio of the composer, followed by a paragraph from the composer, and then commentary from various eighth blackbird artists, with recollections of their first-hand encounters with the composer.

Currently in residence at both the University of Chicago and Northwestern University, eighth blackbird is garnering prestigious engagements, glowing reviews, and competition victories, including the 2000 Naumburg Chamber Music Award.

The group’s 2002-2003 tour schedule has taken it to major U.S. cities including Washington, D.C., New York, Philadelphia, and Atlanta. The coming weeks see them performing in Los Angeles, April 12; Portland, Ore., April 13; and Cincinnati, June 20. (The group’s concert schedule and reviews are posted on its web site, www.eighthblackbird.com.)

The ensemble’s second Cedille CD, scheduled for spring 2004 release, will offer Daniel

Kellogg's *Divinum Mysterium* and George Crumb's *Voice of the Whale*. The third disc, slated for spring 2005, will feature works by Frederic Rzewski, including *Pocket Symphony* and *Coming Together*.

Cedille Records (pronounced say-DEE), dedicated to showcasing Chicago's most noteworthy classical artists, is an arm of the nonprofit Chicago Classical Recording Foundation.

For a free catalog and the whereabouts 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; www.cedillerecords.org.

###

THIRTEEN WAYS
(Cedille Records CDR 90000 067)

Joan Tower (arr. Allen Otte): *Petroushskates* (1980) (5:49)

George Perle: *Critical Moments 2* (2001) (11:24)

David Schober: *Variations* (1998) (9:05)

Thomas Albert: *Thirteen Ways* (1997) (28:48)

eighth blackbird