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News

Recording release date: Nov. 12, 2021

Clarinetist Anthony McGill and Pianist Gloria Chien Play Brahms, Weber, and Montgomery on Cedille Records Album Arriving November 12

‘Here With You’ celebrates 15 years of friendship and collaboration

Clarinetist Anthony McGill, the 2020 Avery Fisher Prize recipient and the first African-American principal player of the New York Philharmonic, and pianist Gloria Chien, a noted soloist and chamber musician who frequently performs with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, offer a program comprised mostly of German Romantic masterworks central to the clarinet repertoire alongside the world-premiere recording of the clarinet and piano version of a new work by contemporary American composer Jessie Montgomery on an album to be released November 12, 2021, on Cedille Records.

Here With You, the duo’s first commercially distributed recording, offers Johannes Brahms’ Opus 120 Sonatas for Clarinet and Piano and Carl Maria von Weber’s *Grand Duo Concertant*, Op. 48 — works the artists say they have long yearned to record — and Montgomery’s timely, pandemic-born *Peace* (Cedille Records CDR 90000 207).

In their preface to the album booklet, McGill and Chien, longtime friends and musical collaborators, call *Here With You* “our dream album” representing a “shared expression of beauty and friendship.”

Bonding Over Brahms

McGill, a Chicago native, and Taiwan-born Chien, pianist and artistic director of Chamber Music Northwest in Portland, Oregon, among other positions, first met at the 2006 Music@Menlo festival in northern California. McGill was a guest artist, Chien a participant in the Chamber Music Institute.

They didn’t perform together at that time, but while discussing the works of Brahms, they sensed a strong musical kinship and chemistry.

“Once in a rare while, you find a musical partner with whom you share a particularly special bond, a deep unspoken connection,” the duo writes. “This was the case when we first met 15 years ago, and that bond has continued ever since.”

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In a podcast interview with Cedille Records founder and president James Ginsburg, McGill says *Here With You* represents “amazing music that’s so personal for me” as a clarinetist. “I wanted to share that and be able to bring that to an audience with Gloria.” McGill and Chien’s complete interview can be streamed at <https://bit.ly/3b8o0Mt>.

Composer-Pianists, Inspired by Clarinetists

Weber and Brahms were accomplished pianists who wrote for — and performed with — the leading clarinetists of their day.

One of the most virtuosic works in the clarinet repertoire, Weber’s *Grand Duo Concertant*, completed in 1816 for clarinetist Heinrich Baermann, has been described as “a double concerto without orchestra” showcasing sheer virtuosity for both instruments. The pianist performs a challenging solo role while also providing the “orchestral” accompaniment.

“It’s operatic, it’s acrobatic, it’s all of those things,” Chien says. “And it’s a piece that we’ve played together for quite a while, and every time we come back, we have more fun with it. It doesn’t get any easier, though.”

Brahms was so inspired by the playing of clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld that he came out of a recently announced retirement to compose the Opus 120 sonatas, completed in 1894, and other works with that artist in mind.

McGill calls these late Brahms sonatas “some of the greatest things he ever put to paper.”

Brahms’ Sonata No. 1 spotlights fast-paced, intense dialogues between the two players, while his Sonata No. 2 explores the clarinet’s entire tonal range.

Bringing ‘Peace’

Montgomery, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s newest Mead Composer-in-Residence, wrote her heartfelt, warmly contemplative *Peace* in 2020, shortly after the first COVID-19 quarantine restrictions, amid a personal crisis and widespread distress.

“I’m at a stage of making peace with sadness as it comes and goes like any other emotion,” she says in her program note. “I’m learning to observe sadness for the first time not as a negative emotion, but as a necessary dynamic to the human experience.”

McGill encountered the work through an online performance by violinist Elena Urioste and her husband, pianist Tom Poster, and was deeply moved, characterizing it as a “beacon” into the psyche of the music world during that difficult period.

“It just moved me so much because I feel like as a community, as a country, as a world, we were not at peace in so many ways,” McGill says.

“Magical” Recording Venue

Here With You was produced and engineered by Alan Bise from October 31 to November 2, 2020, in Mechanics Hall, Worcester, Massachusetts.

The duo praises the historic venue's acoustics and visual appeal. McGill calls it "one of the great halls of the world." Chien applauds it as "one of the most magical places for music."

She adds, "To have that hall and to live in that sound for a few days after not being able to play for many, many months, it was a gift."

Anthony McGill on Cedille Records

Here With You is clarinetist McGill's fourth Cedille Records recording.

His Cedille discography also includes *Mozart & Brahms Clarinet Quintets* with the Pacifica Quartet; *Portraits — Works for Flute, Clarinet & Piano*, recorded with his brother Demarre McGill and Irish pianist Michael McHale; and *Winged Creatures*, recorded with Demarre McGill and the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra led by Allen Tinkham.

McGill has been hailed for his "trademark brilliance, penetrating sound and rich character" (*The New York Times*). Prior to joining the New York Philharmonic, he was principal clarinet with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and associate principal clarinet of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. He appears as soloist with leading orchestras and collaborates with top chamber ensembles and soloists.

He is artistic director for the Music Advancement Program at The Juilliard School and serves on the faculty there, and he is the first William R. and Hyunah Yu Brody Distinguished Chair at the Curtis Institute of Music.

He performed alongside Itzhak Perlman, Yo-Yo Ma, and Gabriela Montero at the 2009 inauguration of President Barack Obama, premiering a piece by John Williams. In 2020, McGill's #TakeTwoKnees campaign protesting the murder of George Floyd and historic racial injustice went viral. anthonymcgill.com.

Gloria Chien's Cedille Debut

A Steinway Artist making her Cedille Records debut, pianist Chien "appears to excel in everything" (*Boston Globe*). She made her orchestral debut at age 16 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) with Thomas Dausgaard and performed again with the BSO under Keith Lockhart.

She has performed as a recitalist and chamber musician at Alice Tully Hall, the Library of Congress, the Phillips Collection, the Dresden Music Festival, and the National Concert Hall in Taiwan. A former member of The Bowers Program (formerly CMS Two), she is a familiar presence with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. She launched String Theory, a chamber music series in Chattanooga, Tennessee; served as director of the Chamber Music Institute at the Music@Menlo festival; and with her husband, violinist Soovin Kim, served as artistic director of the Lake Champlain Chamber Music Festival. They are currently artistic directors at Chamber Music Northwest. She is an artist-in-residence at Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee. gloriachien.com

Cedille Records

Launched in November 1989 by 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. The label's catalog of more than 200 front-line albums brims with attractive, off-the-beaten-

path repertoire from the Baroque era to the present day. Works from the classical canon, when they do appear, are usually heard in particularly imaginative pairings.

Cedille has recorded more than 180 Chicago artists and ensembles, with over 80 making their professional recording debuts on the label. Its catalog includes the world premieres of more than 400 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.

Cedille Records is distributed in the Western Hemisphere by Naxos of America and its distribution partners, by Naxos Music UK, and by other independent distributors in the Naxos network in classical music markets around the world.

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Here With You

Anthony McGill, clarinet

Gloria Chien, piano

(Cedille Records CDR 90000 207)

Johannes Brahms:

Sonata in F minor for Clarinet and Piano, Op. 120, No. 1 (22:17)

Sonata in E-flat major for Clarinet and Piano, Op. 120, No. 2 (21:55)

Jessie Montgomery:

Peace* (4:38)

Carl Maria von Weber:

Grand Duo Concertant, Op. 48 (18:02)

*World-premiere recording of clarinet and piano version