

For Immediate Release

Press Contact:
Lisa Jaehnig | Shuman Associates
ljaehnig@shumanassociates.net | (212) 315-1300



CELLIST SETH PARKER WOODS' *DIFFICULT GRACE* TO BE RELEASED BY CEDILLE RECORDS ON APRIL 14

Recording Based on Woods' Tour-de-Force Staged Concert Experience
Conceived by and Featuring Woods in the Roles of Cellist and Narrator

Difficult Grace Features World Premiere Recordings of Works by
Monty Adkins, Fredrick Gifford, Ted Hearne, and Nathalie Joachim,
and Music by Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson and Alvin Singleton



The First Single, Ted Hearne's
A Wedding, or What We Unlearned from Descartes, Released Today
[Watch the Music Video Here](#)

A Second Single, Fredrick Gifford's *Difficult Grace*, to be Released March 17

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS (February 17, 2023) – Hailed by *The Guardian* as “a cellist of power and grace,” Grammy Award-nominated cellist **Seth Parker Woods**’ recording of his multimedia concert tour-de-force *Difficult Grace* (CDR 90000 219) — featuring works written for and with him by Fredrick Gifford, Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, Monty Adkins, Nathalie Joachim, Alvin Singleton, and Ted Hearne — will be released by [Cedille Records](#) on April 14, 2023. *Difficult Grace* marks Woods’ debut recording for Cedille.

Difficult Grace is a semi-autobiographical exploration of Woods' identity; past/present histories and personal growth that draws inspiration from the Great Migration; excerpts from the historic newspaper, *The Chicago Defender*; immigration; and the poetry of Kemi Alabi and Dudley Randall.

In the recording's booklet notes, writer John Fallas states, "In a 1934 essay, the writer and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston suggests that there is something common – what she calls a 'will to adorn' – uniting a wide variety of African American cultural articulations, from styles of speech to clothing and home decoration. Understood thus, adornment may be both an expression of self and community and a creative response to trouble – especially when that trouble arises in the context of a shared history of pain and injustice. This aesthetic of adornment – of constant, joyous multiplication – is embodied in the cellist Seth Parker Woods' ambitious, already acclaimed project *Difficult Grace*, with its relentless, exploratory acts of translation across different artistic media and dizzying expansion of what we might expect a solo instrumentalist to do, on stage or in the studio."

The album opens with its title work, a world premiere recording of Fredrick Gifford's (b. 1972) *Difficult Grace*, that layers solo cello, electronics, and spoken text (delivered by Woods) derived from Dudley Randall's poem, "Primitives." The second track, Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson's (1932–2004) "Calvary Ostinato," the all-plucked third movement from *Lamentations Black/Folk Song Suite*, references traditional African American music. Additional world premiere recordings include Monty Adkins' (b. 1972) *Winter Tendrils* and Nathalie Joachim's (b. 1983) *The Race: 1915*. Alvin Singleton's (b. 1940) *Argoru II* and Joachim *Dam Mwen Yo*, featuring Joachim as vocalist, follow. The album closes with a final world premiere: Ted Hearne's (b. 1982) multi-movement *Freefucked*, a suite of songs set to poems by Kemi Alabi, featuring Hearne on vocals and electronics on the final track, "After We Ruin."

Released today, the album's first single, [Ted Hearne's A Wedding, or What We Unlearned from Descartes](#), is accompanied by a music video featuring footage from the world premiere performance of *Difficult Grace* at 92NY in November 2022, for which Woods was hailed by *The New York Times* as a "cellist of prodigious technical gifts and sharp intellect" and "an artist rooted in classical music, but whose cello is a vehicle that takes him, and his concertgoers, on wide-ranging journeys." An evocative, theatrical, and genre-bending collaboration with choreographer/dancer Roderick George, the staged version of *Difficult Grace* featured Woods in the triple role of cellist, narrator/guide, and movement artist, with visual artwork by Jacob Lawrence, Barbara Earl Thomas, Zoë McLean, and Freida Abtan; sound design by Christopher Botta; and lighting and visual design by Thomas Dunn. The second single from the album, Fredrick Gifford's *Difficult Grace*, will be released March 17.

Woods performs the concert version of *Difficult Grace* at [Chicago's Harris Theater](#) on Thursday, April 20, 2023 at 6 pm CT, and for the [San Diego Symphony's Currents Series](#) on Tuesday, November 28, 2023 at 7:30 pm PT.

Difficult Grace is produced by Elaine Martone, Seth Parker Woods, and Ted Hearne (*Freefucked*), and engineered by Bill Maylone. It was recorded September 12–17, 2022 at Chicago Recording Company, Chicago, IL, and October 18–19 and November 14, 2022 at Unsettlement Studios in Los Angeles, CA (*Freefucked* vocals).

About Seth Parker Woods

Hailed by *The Guardian* as "a cellist of power and grace" who possesses "mature artistry and willingness to go to the brink," cellist Seth Parker Woods has established his reputation as a versatile artist and innovator across multiple genres. His projects delve deep into our cultural fabric, reimagining traditional works and commissioning new ones to propel classical music into the future. Woods is a recipient of the 2022 Chamber Music America Michael Jaffee Visionary Award.

Woods has appeared with the ICTUS Ensemble (Brussels, BE), Ensemble L'Arsenale (IT), zone Experimental (CH), Basel Sinfonietta (CH), Ensemble LPR, Orchestra of St. Luke's, the Atlanta and

Seattle Symphonies, and in chamber music with violinist Hilary Hahn and pianist Andreas Haefliger. A fierce advocate for contemporary arts, Woods has collaborated and worked with a wide range of artists ranging from the likes of Louis Andriessen, Elliott Carter, Heinz Holliger, G. F. Haas, Helmut Lachenmann, Klaus Lang, and Peter Eötvös to Peter Gabriel, Sting, Lou Reed, Dame Shirley Bassey, and Rachael Yamagata to such visual artists as Ron Athey, Vanessa Beecroft, Jack Early, Adam Pendleton, and Aldo Tambellini. He recently premiered concertos by Rebecca Saunders and Tyshawn Sorey.

His debut solo album, *asinglewordisnotenough* (Confront Recordings-London), was released in November 2016. He was nominated for a 2023 Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performance as a soloist in Wild Up's recording, *Julius Eastman Vol. 2: Joy Boy* on New Amsterdam Records (2022).

Woods recently joined the faculty of the Thornton School of Music at The University of Southern California as Assistant Professor of Practice - Cello and Chamber Music. He previously served on the faculties of the University at Buffalo, University of Chicago, Dartmouth College, and the Chicago Academy of the Arts and as Artist in Residence at the University of Miami's Frost School of Music and Northwestern University - Center for New Music. Woods holds degrees from Brooklyn College, Musik Akademie der Stadt Basel, and a PhD from the University of Huddersfield. In the 2020-21 season, he was an Artist in Residence with the Kaufman Music Center, and from 2018-2020 he served as Artist in Residence with Seattle Symphony and Creative Consultant for the interactive concert hall, Octave 9: Raisbeck Music Center. Seth Parker Woods is a Pirastro Artist and endorses Pirastro Perpetual Strings worldwide.

About 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. 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. Cedille recordings are available on CD, as MP3 and hi-resolution FLAC downloads, and on all major streaming platforms.

Difficult Grace

CDR 90000 219

Seth Parker Woods, cello

FREDRICK GIFFORD (b. 1972)

- 1 *Difficult Grace** [6:24]

COLERIDGE-TAYLOR PERKINSON (1932–2004)

- 2 "Calvary Ostinato" from *Lamentations: Black/Folk Song Suite* [3:25]

MONTY ADKINS (b. 1972)

- 3 *Winter Tendrils** [10:23]

NATHALIE JOACHIM (b. 1983)

- 4 *The Race: 1915** [7:07]

ALVIN SINGLETON (b. 1940)

- 5 *Argoru II* [12:15]

NATHALIE JOACHIM

- 6 *Dam Mwen Yo* [5:29]

Nathalie Joachim, voice

TED HEARNE (b. 1982)

*Freefucked**

- 7 free fucked (1) [1:45]
- 8 A Wedding, or What We Unlearned from Descartes [5:15]
- 9 free fucked (2) [2:59]
- 10 The Lion Tamer's Daughter vs. the Ledge [4:16]
- 11 After We Ruin [2:18]

Ted Hearne, voice and electronics

TT: 61:47

*World Premiere Recording

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