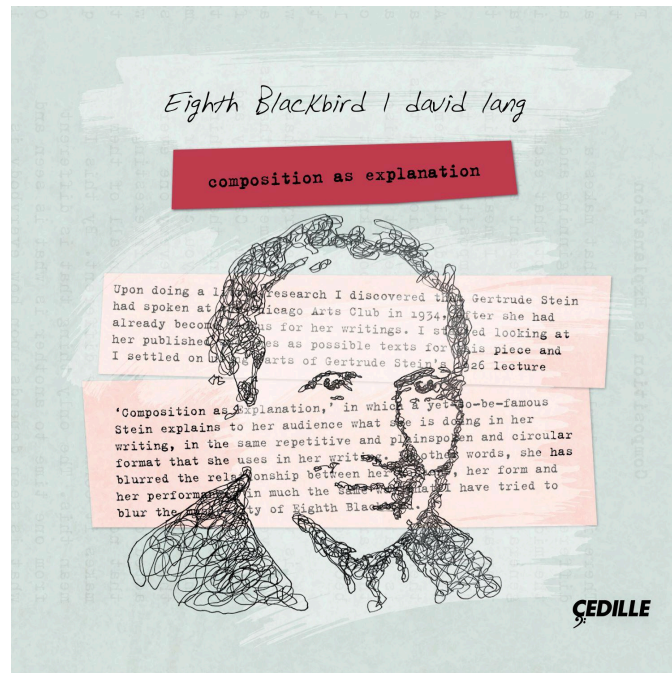


For Immediate Release

**EIGHTH BLACKBIRD'S WORLD-PREMIERE RECORDING OF
DAVID LANG'S *COMPOSITION AS EXPLANATION*
TO BE RELEASED BY CEDILLE RECORDS, JULY 12**



CHICAGO, ILLINOIS (June 21, 2024) — Adapted from the seminal 1926 lecture of the same name by modernist icon Gertrude Stein, Pulitzer Prize-winning composer David Lang's multidisciplinary chamber work *composition as explanation* appears on recording for the first time, performed by four-time Grammy Award-winning sextet Eighth Blackbird for Cedille Records. Originally commissioned for and premiered by the ensemble in 2016 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Arts Club of Chicago, the work underwent further development for performances at Duke University in 2022, presented by co-commissioner Duke Performances and directed by acclaimed stage director Anne Bogart. Lang describes *composition as explanation* as a work of “Super Chamber Music” that incorporates elements of theater and performance art to more fully express Stein’s insights into language and artistic expression, particularly in response to the First World War.

composition as explanation becomes available Friday, July 12, in two versions: (1) the Full Production Edition, which comprises the complete work, including purely spoken-word passages,

available on CD and via digital retailers and platforms, and (2) the Artist Cut, with spoken text cuts, available exclusively on streaming services.

The idea of basing a chamber work on one of Stein's lectures grew out of the writer's connection to the Arts Club of Chicago. For the new commission, Lang sought to honor the club's centennial by building a connection to its past; in the course of his research, he learned that Stein had spoken at the club in its early years. Turning to the writer's lectures as possible source material, Lang was drawn to "Composition as Explanation," in which, as he says in the album's liner notes:

"a yet-to-be-famous Stein explains to her audience what she is doing in her writing, in the same repetitive, plainspoken, and circular format that she uses in her writing. In other words, she has blurred the relationship between content, form, and performance—in much the same way that I have tried to blur the musicality of Eighth Blackbird."

This blurring of lines includes asking ensemble members to be stage actors as well as musicians; in preparation for the world premiere, the sextet took lessons in acting, diction, and the art of theater. Such demands are nothing new for the ensemble, however, as Eighth Blackbird's artistry has long embraced the commingling of music and other art forms, including collaborations with visual artists, choreographers, and stage directors.

composition as explanation is Eighth Blackbird's 12th album for Cedille Records. It was preceded by *Singing in the Dead of Night* (2020), which features a past ensemble commission from Lang titled *these broken wings* (2008). Eighth Blackbird's Cedille catalog includes four Grammy Award-winning recordings: *Filament* (2015), *meanwhile* (2012), *Lonely Motel: Music from Slide* (2011), and *Strange Imaginary Animals* (2006).

ABOUT EIGHTH BLACKBIRD

Eighth Blackbird (8BB) moves music forward through innovative performance, advocacy for music by living creatives, and its growing legacy of guiding an emerging generation of artists. "A brand-name defined by adventure, vibrancy and quality" (*Detroit Free Press*) and hailed as "one of the smartest, most dynamic ensembles on the planet" (*Chicago Tribune*), Eighth Blackbird was founded in 1996 and continues today under the leadership of collaborative directors Lisa Kaplan and Matthew Duvall. Accolades include four Grammy Awards for Best Small Ensemble/Chamber Music Performance, the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions, the Concert Artists Guild Competition Grand Prize, the Musical America Ensemble of the Year, the Chamber Music America Visionary Award, the APRA AMCOS Art Music Awards Performance of the Year. Creative output includes commissions and world premieres, fully produced theatrical chamber music productions, chamber ensemble concertos with both orchestras and bands, and an extensive recording catalog with Cedille Records. In addition to performance, the members of 8BB value their roles as curators, educators, and mentors. Beginning exclusively as a chamber music sextet, 8BB has expanded in recent years to represent multiple mission-driven initiatives: Eighth Blackbird, Blackbird IV, the Blackbird Creative Lab, the Chicago Artists Workshop, and Blackbird Productions.

The name “Eighth Blackbird” derives from the eighth stanza of Wallace Stevens’ evocative, imagistic poem, *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*: “I know noble accents / And lucid, inescapable rhythms; / But I know, too, / That the blackbird is involved / In what I know.”

Learn more about Eighth Blackbird at eighthblackbird.org.

ABOUT DAVID LANG

David Lang is one of the most highly esteemed and performed American composers writing today. His works have been performed around the world in most of the great concert halls. Lang’s *the little match girl passion*, commissioned by Carnegie Hall and premiered by Paul Hillier and Theatre of Voices, was recently listed by *The Guardian* as “one of the top 25 works of classical music written in the 21st Century.” It won the Pulitzer Prize in 2008 and the recording received a Grammy Award in 2010. *simple song #3*, written as part of his score for Paolo Sorrentino’s acclaimed film *YOUTH*, received many awards nominations in 2016, including the Academy Award and Golden Globe. His opera *prisoner of the state* (with libretto by Lang) was co-commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, Rotterdam’s De Doelen Concert Hall, London’s Barbican Centre, Barcelona’s l’Auditori, Bochum Symphony Orchestra, and Bruges’s Concertgebouw, and premiered June 2019 in New York (conducted by Jaap van Zweden). *prisoner of the state* received its UK premiere in January 2020 with the BBC Symphony (conducted by Ilan Volkov) and its EU premiere in May 2023 with the Bochum Sinfoniker (conducted by Steven Sloane). Lang is a Professor of Music Composition at the Yale School of Music. He is co-founder and co-artistic director of New York’s legendary music collective Bang on a Can. His music is published by Red Poppy Music and G. Ricordi & Co., New York (ASCAP) and is distributed worldwide by the Universal Music Publishing Group.

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. A nonprofit record label, Cedille’s mission is to produce and disseminate audiophile recordings presenting the finest classical music performers and composers in and from Chicago. The recordings further the careers and legacies of these Chicago artists as Cedille invests in not only the recordings but in the artists represented on them. 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, including world premieres of more than 400 classical compositions. Works from the classical canon, when they do appear, are usually heard in particularly imaginative pairings. Cedille never removes albums from its catalog and each recording is a permanent documentation of the artist’s work. With more than 180 Chicago artists and ensembles, over 80 making their professional recording debuts on the label, Cedille brings the area’s most significant classical music artists to a worldwide listening public. Cedille recordings are available on CD, as MP3 and hi-resolution FLAC downloads, and on all major streaming platforms. Learn more about Cedille Records and explore the label’s catalog at cedillerecords.org.

EIGHTH BLACKBIRD
DAVID LANG: COMPOSITION AS EXPLANATION
CEDILLE RECORDS — CDR 90000 230
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Eighth Blackbird

Lina Andonovska, flutes
Ashley Bathgate, cello
Maiani da Silva, violin
Matthew Duvall, percussion
Zachary Good, clarinets
Lisa Kaplan, piano

DAVID LANG (b. 1957)
composition as explanation

1. there is singularly nothing (8:05)
2. those who are creating (4:18)
3. of course it is beautiful (4:53)
4. beginning again and again (4:00)
5. it is understood by this time (4:10)
6. and now to begin as if to begin (5:23)
7. and after that what changes (4:14)
8. intertext (4:52)
9. the problem from this time on (9:12)
10. this then (3:08)
11. the time in the composition (7:20)

TT: (59:38)

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

Produced by Eighth Blackbird members Matthew Duvall and Lisa Kaplan and engineers Emily Lazar and Bill Maylone. Recorded in the Court Theatre at the University of Chicago, September 28–October 1, 2023.

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