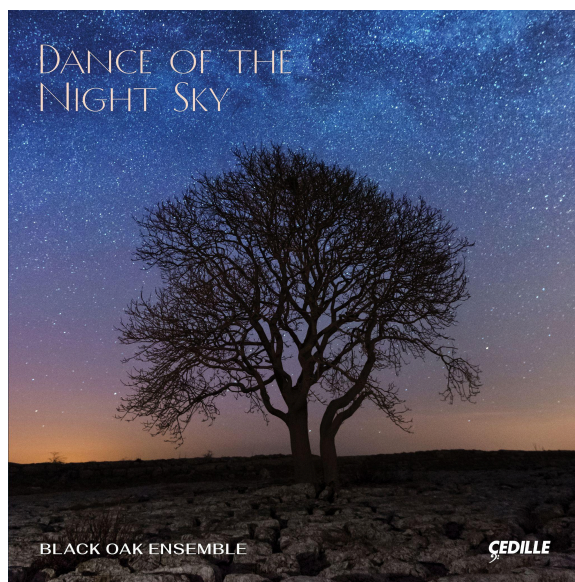


For Immediate Release



BLACK OAK ENSEMBLE'S *DANCE OF THE NIGHT SKY* TO BE RELEASED ON CEDILLE RECORDS, MAY 9

The ensemble's third Cedille album aims to expand the repertoire for string trio with eight contemporary works — including four world premiere recordings — by British women composers



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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS (April 7, 2025) — The **Black Oak Ensemble** continues to push the boundaries of the string trio repertoire with *Dance of the Night Sky*, their third album on Cedille Records, to be released on **Friday, May 9, 2025**. *Dance of the Night Sky* features eight contemporary trios by a multigenerational cohort of British women composers, including world-premiere recordings of works by Shirley J. Thompson, Carol J. Jones, Grace-Evangeline Mason, and Errollyn Wallen, and works by Judith Weir, Dobrinka Tabakova, Freya Waley-Cohen, and Sally Beamish.

The Black Oak Ensemble comprises Swiss-American violinist **Desirée Ruhstrat**, British-born cellist **David Cunliffe**—both of whom are founding members of the multi-Grammy-nominated Lincoln

Trio—and French-born violist **Aurélien Fort Pederzoli**, who was a founding member of the groundbreaking, Grammy-nominated Spektral Quartet. They have made it their mission to uncover, perform, and record overlooked works for string trio, a less-common form in chamber music.

The idea for the album was born out of a mistaken Google search. During the 2022 World Cup, with Switzerland, Germany, France, and England all in the running—all countries reflecting the ensemble's heritage—a bit of rivalry emerged. Ruhstrat, searching for British string trio composers, had previously been looking for world cup scores and accidentally included “soccer” in her query, leading to the discovery of **Shirley J. Thompson's** Concerto for Football and Orchestra. A subsequent deep dive into British string trios revealed that most were by women—and a new album concept was born.

Dance of the Night Sky, the album's title work, was written by Thompson for the Black Oak Ensemble and is heard here in its world premiere recording; the ensemble premiered it at the 2024 Soirée Cedille gala. Other works recorded for the first time include **Carol J. Jones's** *bulawayo railway*, with music conjuring a steam train station in Zimbabwe; **Grace-Evangeline Mason's** *Into The Abyss, I Throw Roses*, inspired by the enigmatic poetry of Friedrich Nietzsche; and *Making Hay* by **Errolyn Wallen CBE**, encompassing her arrangement of J.S. Bach's Prelude in E Major from Book 1 of The Well Tempered Clavier.

Other works include *The Bagpiper's String Trio* by **Dame Judith Weir**, based on the life of James Reid, a Scottish bagpiper who was captured by the English in 1746 and executed after a judge had classified the bagpipes as a weapon. **Sally Beamish's** *The King's Alchemist* comprises four variations on the French folksong “L'Homme Armé” while exploring the story of John Damian, a European alchemist at the court of Scottish King James IV who donned wings to fly to France from Scotland's Stirling Castle. *Insight* by **Dobrinka Tavakova** evokes other instruments such as the accordion and a brass fanfare. Of her trio, *Conjure*, composer **Freya Waley-Cohen** says, “Writing this trio, I started to think of the archetypal magical beings who are represented in threes, three graces, three witches, three muses, three little pigs, three fates, three furies.”

Dance of the Night Sky follows the Black Oak Ensemble's two previous acclaimed albums on Cedille: *Avant L'Orage* (2022), comprising rarely heard French string trios composed between the two World Wars, and *Silenced Voices* (2019), featuring works by composers who perished in the Holocaust.

ABOUT THE BLACK OAK ENSEMBLE

Praised for its “insightful, committed and masterful performances” (*Classics Today* 10/10) and “fierce eloquence” (*London Times*), the Black Oak Ensemble has established itself as one of the most innovative and exciting chamber ensembles on the international stage.

The Trio's previous CD release, *Avant l'orage*, a double album of French string trios, reached #1 on the *Billboard* Classical Charts, was featured as Album of the week on Symphony Hall Sirius XM, and was nominated for a 2023 ICMA International Chamber Music Award.

Black Oak's debut album, *Silenced Voices* (Cedille Records), is dedicated to Jewish composers, most of whom lost their lives during the Holocaust. It has been featured in *Gramophone* and *Strings* magazines and on BBC Radio 3, The Violin Channel, and Sirius XM.

The ensemble has collaborated with renowned artists such as guitarists Mak Grgic, Goran Ivanovic, Denis Azabagic, and José Ferreira; harpsichordist Jory Vinikour; Avery Fisher Career Grant winner, pianist Henry Kramer; Pallavi Mahidhra; members of Eighth Blackbird; ~Nois, and flutist Eugenia Molinar. Passionate advocates of new works, they have commissioned and premiered string trios from renowned composers such as Errol Wallen, Shirley Thompson, Michael Nyman, David Ludwig, Mischa Zupko, and Conrad Tao and discovered works by Dick Kattenburg, Geza Fríd, Gustave Samazeuilh, Henri Tomasi, and Robert Casadesus.

Recent international tours have taken the Black Oak Ensemble to Amsterdam, Geneva (a special performance dedicated to human rights), the Everlasting Hope Festival in Terezin (in honor of composers persecuted and murdered by the Nazis during the occupation of Prague), Paris, Grenoble, Lyon, Rennes, Corsica, Serbia, Belgrade, and Poland. In summer 2023, the ensemble collaborated with violinist Rachel Kolly and cellist Nadege Rochat for sold out performances at the Schubertiade in Fribourg, Switzerland.

In the U.S. they have appeared at the Newport Music Festival, Ravinia, Music at the Morgan, New York University, Chicago Cultural Center, Art Institute of Chicago, Latino Music Festival (Chicago), University of Oregon, and many other venues. The Black Oak Ensemble have held residencies at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, St. John's School for the Arts (USVI), and Arizona State University, and their individual and ensemble students have been prize winners of national and international competitions. They are proud to collaborate with "In Crescendo," based in Colombia (South America), Evanston Young Artists, Chicago Musical Pathways Initiative, and the Ravinia Festival's El Sistema program.

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 well over 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 artists' 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 Cedille Records and explore the label's catalog at cedillerecords.org.

BLACK OAK ENSEMBLE

Dance of the Night Sky

CEDILLE RECORDS — CDR 90000 237

Black Oak Ensemble

TRACK LISTING

SHIRLEY J. THOMPSON (b. 1958)

1. Dance of the Night Sky* (7:10)

JUDITH WEIR (b. 1954)

The Bagpiper's String Trio (7:21)

2. I. Salute (2:39)
3. II. Nocturne (1:36)
4. III. Lament, over the sea (3:01)

DOBRINKA TAVAKOVA (b. 1980)

5. Insight (10:10)

CAROL J. JONES (b. 1993)

6. bulawayo railway* (3:39)

FREYA WALEY COHEN (b. 1989)

7. Conjure (13:02)

SALLY BEAMISH (b. 1956)

The King's Alchemist (11:27)

8. I. Cantus (3:24)
9. II. Aqua Vitae (2:07)
10. III. Pavana (3:11)
11. IV. Avis Hominis (2:35)

GRACE-EVANGELINE MASON (b. 1994)

12. Into the Abyss, I Throw Roses* (7:54)

ERROLLYN WALLEN (b. 1958)

13. Making Hay* (8:19)

Total Duration: 69:59

*World-premiere recording

Produced and engineered by James Ginsburg and Bill Maylone. Recorded September 9, 11, 13, 16 and October 10, 2024 in Mary B. Galvin Recital Hall at Northwestern University, Evanston, IL.

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