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News

Recording release date: June 12, 2020

Eighth Blackbird Plays Music of David Lang, Michael Gordon, and Julia Wolfe on New Cedille Records Album Arriving June 12

Grammy-winning new-music sextet offers world-premiere recording of 'Singing in the Dead of Night,' a collaborative work written expressly for them

Chicago-based new-music sextet Eighth Blackbird, winners of four Grammy Awards for their previous Cedille Records albums, are heard in the world-premiere recording of *Singing in the Dead of Night*, a collaborative, all-instrumental program created for the ensemble by American composers David Lang, Michael Gordon, and Julia Wolfe, founders and leaders of New York's Bang on a Can collective.

Singing in the Dead of Night, available June 12, 2020, comprises Lang's three-movement *these broken wings*, Gordon's *the light of the dark*, and the album's title track, Wolfe's *singing in the dead of night* (Cedille Records CDR 90000 195).

Each takes its name from Paul McCartney's lyrics to The Beatles song "Blackbird" but exists in an entirely different musical realm from the 1968 pop classic.

For the recording, Eighth Blackbird sequenced the component pieces in the unconventional, composer-approved concert order they've employed since the collaborative work's 2008 premiere: They play the Gordon and Wolfe works in between movements of the Lang, whose piece thus frames the program.

San Francisco Classical Voice praised the ensemble's "electrifying" local performance of *Singing in the Dead of Night* and hailed it as "a delectably adept piece for this high-energy — and high-execution sextet."

"Astonishing abilities"

In his preface to the liner notes, Lang, winner of a Pulitzer Prize in music, says he and his colleagues set out "to take advantage of the full range of Eighth Blackbird's astonishing abilities."

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These attributes, Lang writes, include their “great” playing, “amazing concentration,” work ethic, affinity for “really hard music,” and their longstanding practice of memorizing scores “so they can move around while they play.”

“Glamorously beautiful”

Lang’s three-movement *these broken wings*, a “glamorously beautiful suite” (*The Guardian*), takes flight via Eighth Blackbird’s boundless stamina and high-voltage virtuosity. The intense first movement gives way to a slow second movement dominated by “sad, falling gestures,” Lang writes. The piece concludes with a propulsive, melodic movement he hoped might inspire the performers to dance.

Gordon’s music melds “the nervous brilliance of free jazz and the intransigence of classical modernism” (*The New Yorker*). In *the light of the dark*, he evokes the wild spontaneity of an uninhibited, late-night jam session. The piece opens with what the composer describes as a “heavy-metal-esque cello line” and proceeds to incorporate “unpredictable metallic crashes, swirling virtuosic fiddling, and colliding glissandos.”

Pulitzer Prize winner Wolfe’s *singing in the dead of night* conjures a dark, silent solitude from which creative inspiration emerges — “the still and surreal nighttime experience of being the only one awake,” she writes. Wolfe incorporated “silences, sandpaper sounds, and density” with an eye toward choreographer Susan Marshall, who conceived Eighth Blackbird’s stage movements.

Recording Team

Singing in the Dead of Night was recorded by multiple Grammy Award-winning producer Elaine Martone and Grammy-nominated engineer Bill Maylone September 30–October 3, 2019, in the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts at the University of Chicago.

Eighth Blackbird

Eighth Blackbird garnered Grammy Awards for Best Chamber Music and Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance for their Cedille albums *Strange Imaginary Animals*, *Lonely Motel*, *Meanwhile*, and *Filament*.

The ensemble first gained wide recognition in 1998 as winners of the Concert Artists Guild Competition. They’ve commissioned and premiered hundreds of works by composers such as Bryce Dessner, Jennifer Higdon, Missy Mazzoli, Nico Muhly, and Steve Reich. Eighth Blackbird was named *Musical America*’s 2017 Ensemble of the Year. In 2016, the ensemble received Chamber Music America’s inaugural Visionary Award and the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

The ensemble's website is www.eighthblackbird.org.

Cedille Records

Launched in November 1989, 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 highlight of Cedille's 30th anniversary season, 2019–2020, is its first-ever Emerging Artist Competition. Individual performers and ensembles from the Chicago area are competing for the opportunity to make a recording produced by and released on the award-winning label. Semifinal and final rounds of judging will take place via public performances by the contestants this fall.

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.

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Singing in the Dead of Night

Eighth Blackbird

Cedille Records CDR 90000 195

1. David Lang: *these broken wings*, part 1 (3:36)
2. Michael Gordon: *the light of the dark* (11:34)
3. Lang: *these broken wings*, part 2 (passacaille) (5:49)
4. Julia Wolfe: singing in the dead of night (18:51)
5. Lang: *these broken wings*, part 3 (learn to fly) (5:45)