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# NEWS & INFORMATION

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## **WINSOME WOODWIND WORKS BY EASLEY BLACKWOOD**

### **World Premieres Breathe New Life into Clarinet Repertoire**

It's hard to find noteworthy music for clarinet and piano, not to mention accessible contemporary compositions.

Composer and pianist Easley Blackwood expands the repertoire with two accessible yet substantial works written in 1994 and receiving their recording debuts on Cedille Records' *Clarinet Sonatas by Easley Blackwood and Max Reger* (CDR 90000 022). Both Blackwood works were written for John Bruce Yeh, assistant principal clarinetist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, who performs on the album with Blackwood.

"These are pieces worth playing, worth mastering" Yeh says. "Blackwood has perfect understanding of what the instrument does well and how to make the best of it."

Most clarinet and piano works by major composers are for the B-flat clarinet, so Blackwood took a different tack by writing for the Clarinet in A and the E-flat piccolo clarinet. His richly melodic, high-stepping Sonata in A minor in for Clarinet and Piano moves with a ballet-like rhythmic verve. His festive Sonatina in F major for Piccolo Clarinet, Op. 38 explores the uncharted lyrical side of an instrument usually relegated to humorous or grotesque effects in large orchestral works.

"There is no repertoire whatever for piano and E-flat clarinet -- at least to my knowledge,"

Blackwood writes in the CD booklet.

## CLARINET SONATAS -- 2

Best-known for his somber, sprawling organ works, Max Reger reveals surprisingly witty and tender sides to his musical personality in the Sonata No. 3 in B-flat major, Op. 107 (1909), an early 20th century piece that echoes the bygone German Romantic tradition. The sonata had long been a favorite of Yeh, who convinced Blackwood, a musical collaborator for some 17 years, to consider adding it to his repertoire. One reason the sonata co-exists so well alongside Blackwood's is that they're "similar in harmonic idiom," Blackwood says.

Blackwood's "distinctive, accessible style" (*Daily Herald*) and "honed historical capability and brilliant technique" (*The Strad*) can be heard on Cedille's world premiere recordings of his Cello Sonata (CDR 90000 008) and Symphony No. 5 (CDR 90000 016). As a pianist, Blackwood is cited in *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians* "for his performance of modern works of transcendental difficulty." His Cedille recordings of music by Casella and Szymanowski (CDR 90000 003) and sonatas by Ives and Copland (CDR 90000 005) have played to rave reviews.

Yeh became a member of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1977 at age 19. Two years later, Sir Georg Solti appointed him assistant principal clarinetist. He also performs as soloist with orchestras in the U.S. and Europe and with prestigious chamber ensembles such as the Guarneri String Quartet and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

Cedille's CDs are now distributed by Passport Music Distribution, Inc., part of Alliance Entertainment Corp., and are available nationally at finer classical record stores. For a free catalog and the whereabouts of local retail outlets, consumers are invited to write to Cedille Records, 700 W. Barry Ave., Suite 3-E, Chicago, IL 60657-4587, or call (312) 404-0758.

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*Clarinet Sonatas by*  
*Easley Blackwood and Max Reger*  
Blackwood: Sonata in A minor, Op. 37  
Reger: Sonata No. 3 in B-flat major, Op. 107  
Blackwood: Sonatina in F major  
for Piccolo Clarinet, Op. 38  
Cedille Records CDR 90000 022