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News

For Immediate Release

NEW CD SURVEYS WIDE EXPANSE OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN ART SONG

Soprano Patrice Michaels in Premiere Recordings of Works by Prominent Living Composers

Soprano Patrice Michaels and pianist Elizabeth Buccheri traverse a broad musical landscape on *American Songs* (Cedille Records CDR 90000 091), a new CD of art songs written between 1952 and 2002 by a dozen prominent living American composers.

American Songs comprises works by Lee Hoiby, Laurie Altman, Leslie Adams, Lita Grier, Libby Larsen, Richard Pearson Thomas, Robert Carl, John Musto, Eric Ewazen, Dan Tucker, Robert Bowker, and John Harmon.

“My idea for this disc is to share some of the best and most varied current literature for voice and piano,” Ms. Michaels writes in the CD booklet. “I hope this sampling will leave you inspired by the breadth and depth of contemporary American song.”

Of the CD’s 27 songs, 18 are world premiere recordings. Among the premieres are several complete song cycles: Musto’s Pulitzer Prize-nominated *Dove Sta Amore* (1991) based on poems by Carl Sandburg, James Agee, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti; Ewazen’s *Three Lyrics of Edna St. Vincent Millay* (1991) on nature themes, and Tucker’s amusing *Mots d’Heure’s: Gousses, Rames* (1983), using Luis d’Anton van Rooten’s playful poems constructed of French words which, when spoken aloud, sound like Mother Goose rhymes in English.

The most exotic and unusually scored song is also a premiere: Thomas’s Indian raga-inflected love song *Amarilli, mia bella* (1997) with 17th-century Italian text, from his set of songs inspired by the Italian *Arie antiche* style. Percussionist Matthew Duvall of the acclaimed new-music ensemble eighth blackbird accompanies Ms. Michaels on mallet-struck piano strings.

Other premieres include Hoiby's lovely setting of *The Message* (1977) by English Renaissance poet John Donne; Altman's operatic *O del mio dolce ardor – A Reimagining* (revised 2001), Carl's *Beginning My Studies*, based on a Walt Whitman text; Bowker's *Bingo* (1997), a tango version of Maureen Flannery's poem of *double-entendres* evoking teenage romance and sexual desire; and Harmon's jazzy vocalise *Light Feet* (2002), an homage to jazz composer-pianist Bill Evans written expressly for Ms. Michaels.

Ms. Michaels performs four additional Hoiby songs; a trio of jazz, blues, and spiritual-infused pieces by Leslie Adams; nascent composer Lita Grier's dramatic *Who Has Seen the Wind* (1999), and Libby Larsen's gender-bending *Perineo* (1992).

The CD was conceived by Ms. Michaels, a singer noted for her versatility, intelligence, and crystalline voice.

“There appear to be few singers today with both the wide-ranging talent to do these songs justice and the interest in learning them,” said James Ginsburg, Cedille Records' founder and producer, noting the large number of works by major American composers that are receiving their recording debuts on *American Songs*.

“Patrice can do just about anything and do it well,” composer Dan Tucker told Cedille Records. “I'm much impressed with her vocal quality and musicality. She's a convincing and engaging singer with an appealing personality.”

Tucker said that until he heard Ms. Michaels' version of his *Mots d'Heures*, “I didn't realize the pieces were that good.”

The liner notes to *American Songs* include an introduction by Ms. Michaels, song texts and translations, and capsule biographies of the composers.

American Songs is Ms. Michaels' thirteenth recording for Cedille Records. Her discography embraces music from the baroque to the present day. *Early Music America* praised her “sensuous, warm-toned, luxuriant voice” on *The World of Lully* (Cedille Records CDR 9000 043). Her voice “has the same crystalline clarity, buoyancy and colorful vibrato as Dawn Upshaw's,” said *American Record Guide* in reviewing *20th Century Baroque* (Cedille Records 90000 011), on which Ms. Michaels sang music by Dominick Argento. She has an international

concert career and is associate professor of opera theater and studio voice at Lawrence University's Conservatory of Music in Appleton, Wis.

For more than three decades, Chicago-based pianist and performance coach Elizabeth Buccheri has worked at the most rarified levels of the opera, orchestra, chamber music, and recital worlds. As a piano recitalist, she has performed with singers Susanne Mentzer, William Warfield, Samuel Ramey, Elizabeth Futral, Nicole Cabell, and Sherrill Milnes. Ms. Buccheri was the first American to receive the Solti Foundation Award, for her work with conductor Sir Georg Solti on his London Records recordings of operas by Schoenberg, Wagner, and Verdi with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Among her numerous other endeavors, Ms. Buccheri heads the Collaborative Piano program at Northwestern University's School of Music.

Cedille Records (pronounced say-DEE') is dedicated to showcasing the most noteworthy classical artists in and from Chicago. The nonprofit label is an arm of The Chicago Classical Recording Foundation. For a free catalog and the locations of local retail outlets, contact Cedille Records, 5255 N. Lakewood Ave., Chicago, IL 60640-2220, call (773) 989-2515; E-mail: info@cedillerecords.org. On the Net: www.cedillerecords.org.

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American Songs
(Cedille Records CDR 90000 091)

**Works by Lee Hoiby, Laurie Altman, Leslie Adams, Lita Grier,
Libby Larsen, Richard Pearson Thomas*, Robert Carl
John Musto, Eric Ewazen, Dan Tucker,
Robert Bowker, and John Harmon**

**Patrice Michaels, soprano
Elizabeth Buccheri, piano
*Matthew Duvall, percussion**