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News

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Lincoln Trio Spotlights Six Female Composers on Debut CD 'Notable Women'

Headlining Its First Album, Ensemble Performs World-Premiere Recordings of Piano Trios by Auerbach, Garrop, Schwendinger, and Tower

*Works by Higdon and Thomas
round out recording program*

The Lincoln Trio, international music ambassadors for Chicago's Ravinia Festival, headlines its first full-length CD with a program of works by contemporary women composers.

Notable Women: Trios by Today's Female Composers comprises piano trios by six living composers — rising stars as well as established names. The CD is available August 30.

The trio, ensemble in residence at the Music Institute of Chicago, performs the world-premiere recordings of Lera Auerbach's Trio for violin, cello, and piano; Stacy Garrop's *Seven* for piano trio; Laura Elise Schwendinger's *C'è la Luna Questa Sera?*; and Joan Tower's *Trio Cavany*. Rounding out the album are Augusta Read Thomas's *Moon Jig* and Jennifer Higdon's Piano Trio. (Cedille Records CDR 90000 126).

Founded in 2003, the Lincoln Trio consists of violinist Desirée Ruhstrat, cellist David Cunliffe, and pianist Marta Aznavoorian.

In devising a novel concept for its debut CD, the trio looked to its considerable repertoire of contemporary works: the ensemble performs music by a living composer at every concert, alongside standard Classical and Romantic repertoire. Ultimately, a program of works by living American

women emerged from the group's brainstorming, Ruhstrat explained in an interview for Cedille Records.

"We're passionate about the pieces and big fans of these composers," Ruhstrat said. "We have a personal connection with each of them in some way." For instance, Thomas wrote *Moon Jig* for the Lincoln Trio while she was the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's composer in residence. Auerbach and Garrop attended the recording sessions for their respective pieces.

The Lincoln Trio previewed its enterprising program at a critically acclaimed concert in November 2010 at the Music Institute of Chicago. *Chicago Classical Review's* Wynne Delacoma, former classical music critic of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, characterized the event as "a window to what's happening on the contemporary music scene," with "bracing, highly varied music written by some of contemporary music's most talented composers — male or female."

Auerbach (b. 1973) says her three-movement Trio, begun in 1992 and completed in 1996, is "built as one continuous crescendo towards the end" — not in the dynamic sense but as a snowballing of thematic materials that gather critical mass and eventually become one. The composer calls on each instrument for unusual effects. The cellist plays eerie glissandos "imitating the cries of seagulls." A piano solo takes up a cello theme, decorating it with "a glass-like sound." The violinist is asked to play "flautando" (literally, "flute-like"). The final movement "requires virtuosity in all instruments," Auerbach writes in the liner notes. Auerbach is the 2011–12 composer in residence with Dresden's Staatskapelle orchestra and Semper Opera. Her website is www.leraauerbach.com.

Garrop (b. 1969) grapples with profound changes in the human condition in *Seven* (1997–98), a trio inspired by a curious combination of sources: Anne Sexton's poem "Seven Times," about death and the afterlife, and a psychologically tormented half-human, half-machine "Borg" character named Seven of Nine from TV's "Star Trek Voyager." The work, in seven interlinked sections with frequent tempo contrasts, features sonic special effects and shifting sonorities to evoke strange states

of being. The score places particular demands on the pianist: hitting the instrument's strings with the palm of the hand, playing with the forearm, and other challenging maneuvers. Often the players are asked to "freeze," incorporating sudden pauses into the music. Garrop heads the composition department at Roosevelt University's Chicago College of Performing Arts. Her website is www.garrop.com.

Jennifer Higdon's two-movement Piano Trio (2003) sets out to evoke contrasting colors and their associated emotions: the pastel "Pale Yellow" and the incendiary "Fiery Red." The Lincoln Trio performed the latter movement in January to an enthusiastic audience at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall at a showcase concert hosted by the Association of Performing Arts Presenters for recipients of its prestigious 2011 Young Performers Career Advancement Program. In her program notes for the piece, Higdon writes that she has "always been fascinated with the connection between painting and music." One of America's most frequently performed composers, Higdon (b. 1962) received the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in music for her Violin Concerto. She holds an endowed chair in composition at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music. Her website is www.jenniferhigdon.com.

Italy's moonlit Lake Como and its surrounding mountains inspired Laura Elise Schwendinger's mysterious, ethereal *C'è la Luna Questa Sera? (Is There a Moon Tonight?)*, which unfolds in one continuous, rhapsodic movement. Originally written in 1998 for violin, cello, and percussion, it's heard here in a 2006 arrangement for the Lincoln Trio. Schwendinger (b. 1962) is a professor of composition at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She was the first composer to win the American Academy in Berlin Prize Fellowship (1999). Her website is www.lauraschwendinger.com.

Thomas's *Moon Jig* (2005), the first piece composed expressly for the Lincoln Trio, was commissioned by the Music Institute of Chicago. Thomas (b. 1964) describes the piece as "somewhat of a cross between jazz . . . and classical," with the piano serving as "the protagonist, as well as fulcrum point." In addition to her acclaimed tenure as the Chicago Symphony's composer in

residence (1997–2006), Thomas was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2009 and was one of two finalists for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in Music. She recently joined the music faculty of the University of Chicago as one of only four University Professors. For more about the composer, visit www.augustareadthomas.com.

Tower's single-movement *Trio Cavany* (2007) emphasizes the solo potential of each instrument within the piano trio. Its name is an amalgam of the abbreviations for the states of California, Virginia, and New York, where the work's three commissioning organizations are based. A Grammy Award-winner, Tower (b. 1938) was the first woman to win the prestigious Grawemeyer Award. She is currently a professor of music at Bard College, where she has taught since 1972. Her biography is on the G. Schirmer Inc. website, <http://goo.gl/ABMXz>.

Notable Women was produced and engineered by multiple Grammy Award-winner Judith Sherman at sessions Nov. 1–5, 2010, and April 15, 2011, in Bennett Gordon Hall at Ravinia in Highland Park, Ill.

The Artists

The Lincoln Trio takes its name from its home state of Illinois, the “Land of Lincoln.”

Winner of the 2008 Masterplayers International Competition in Venice, Italy, the ensemble has performed throughout the US, including appearances at the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra's Beethoven Chamber Music Series, Oakmont Concert Series in California, Lane Concert Series at the University of Vermont, and the Chamber Music Columbus (Ohio) series.

In March 2011, the Lincoln Trio undertook a concert tour to Vietnam, Singapore, and Hong Kong on behalf of the Ravinia Festival. The trio also toured on behalf of Ravinia for the 2009 Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial. They performed in Essen, Germany, in May 2011 and undertook a four-city tour in Columbia in August. The ensemble's website is www.lincolntrio.com.

In addition to *Notable Women*, the Lincoln Trio appears on three multi-artist CDs in the Cedille Records catalog: *In Eleanor's Words: Music of Stacy Garrop*; *The Billy Collins Suite: Songs Inspired by his Poetry*; and *Composers in the Loft*.

Cedille Records

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Notable Women: Trios by Today's Female Composers
(Cedille Records CDR 90000 126)

Lera Auerbach: Trio (11:36)

Stacy Garrop: *Seven* (11:44)

Jennifer Higdon: Piano Trio (14:02)

Laura Elise Schwendinger: *C'è la Luna Questa Sera?* (5:24)

Augusta Read Thomas: *Moon Jig* (4:40)

Joan Tower: *Trio Cavany* (19:13)

Lincoln Trio