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# News

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*For Immediate Release*

## **CEDILLE RECORDS CHRISTENS NEW CD LABEL WITH MASSES BY MENOTTI AND VIERNE**

**Mid-Priced Imprint Debuts  
With Archival Concert Recordings  
by the William Ferris Chorale**

CHICAGO, Oct. 25, 2006 — Cedille Records, Chicago's independent classical label, has launched a new mid-priced imprint, Cedille FOUNDation, with a CD of archival performances of the William Ferris Chorale singing masses by Gian Carlo Menotti and Louis Vierne, recorded live in concert in the 1980s.

James Ginsburg, founder and president of non-profit Cedille Records, says the subsidiary label "will discover, remaster, and release outstanding archival recordings by artists associated with Cedille Records." (In December, Cedille will begin recording a thoroughly new CD with the William Ferris Chorale, for release in 2007.)

"Because these 'found' recordings entail no original artistic and production costs, we can pass along the savings to our customers," Ginsburg says. He estimates the discs will retail for about \$11.98 each.

The new label's debut CD offers Menotti's *Missa "O Pulchritudo"* ("O Beauty"), composed in 1979, and Vierne's *Messe Solennelle*, Op. 16, composed in 1899 (Cedille FOUNDation 7001).

Like Verdi before him, Menotti turned his operatic skills to a large-scale setting of the Catholic mass. Menotti's is scored for four-part choir, with orchestral accompaniment and solo parts that lend drama and theatrical flair to the sacred work. Notably, Menotti replaced the *Credo* movement with an adaptation of a passage from the *Confessions of St. Augustine*, "O Beauty, ever ancient ever new, late have I loved You."

One summer day, after hearing what he felt was a less-than-ideal performance of his *Missa* by another choir, Menotti (b. 1911) urged William Ferris (1937-2000) to stage a performance of it with his Chicago-based ensemble. Ferris obliged, and Menotti attended the Dec. 12, 1982, concert at Chicago's St. James Cathedral.

In the CD booklet notes, John Vorrasi, cofounder and current artistic director of the William Ferris Chorale, details a particularly memorable Menotti moment during the dress rehearsal. "I recall watching him closely as he sat in the darkened church listening intently," Vorrasi writes.

"At the climatic moment of the *Sanctus* . . . he fell forward to his knees, his head bowed down," Vorrasi writes. "I was truly moved at the sight: a man whose genius had created a work of profound beauty, humbled by a sense of Beauty itself."

Until now, this performance of Menotti's mass had never been released in any format, and it's the only version of this piece available today.

Vierne (1870-1937) studied with César Franck and Charles-Marie Widor at the Paris Conservatory. In 1900, he was appointed organist at Notre Dame.

The *Messe Solennelle*, Opus. 16, for four-part chorus and two organs, was meant to showcase the instruments and acoustics of Notre Dame. "With its sweeping melodies and harmonic grandeur, the work has justifiably been called a triumphant counterpart to Fauré's *Requiem*," Vorrasi writes.

This recording was made in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Chicago on May 20, 1988, and utilizes its two magnificent pipe organs: a fully restored E. M. Skinner grand organ and a tracker action Visser-Rowland choir organ. The CD booklet devotes two pages to the history of the organs and their specifications.

Cedille recording engineer Bill Maylone, a two-time Grammy Award nominee, remastered both of the works on the new CD.

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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*Menotti: Missa "O Pulchritudo" (1979) (43:22)\**  
*Vierne: Messe Solennelle, Op. 16 (1899) (29:12)\*\**  
(Cedille FOUNDation 7001)

**William Ferris Chorale**  
**William Ferris, conductor**

**\*Joan Gibbons, soprano**  
**\*Deborah Fair, mezzo soprano**  
**\*John Vorrasi, tenor**  
**\*Thomas Stillitti, bass**  
**\*Composer Festival Orchestra**

**\*\*Thomas Weisflog, grand organ**  
**\*\* Dexter Bailey, choir organ**