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For Immediate Release

JENNIFER KOH LAUNCHES *THE AMERICAN CONCERTO* RECORDING SERIES WITH CONCERTOS BY VIJAY IYER AND COURTNEY BRYAN ON CEDILLE RECORDS, AUGUST 14

***The American Concerto, Volume One* features Iyer's *Trouble* and the world premiere recording of Bryan's *Syzygy*, performed by the Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble conducted by Timothy Weiss**

New recording series spotlights violin concertos commissioned through Koh's landmark American Concerto project, inviting composers to explore American experiences, identities, and stories through the concerto form

Music from Vijay Iyer's *Trouble* is featured in artist Carrie Mae Weems' *The Cool Blue Wind*, a photographic collage and permanent installation at the Obama Presidential Center

NEW YORK, NY (June 19, 2026) — Cedille Records releases **Jennifer Koh**'s *The American Concerto, Volume One* on **August 14**, the first album in Koh's recording series showcasing violin concertos commissioned through The American Concerto, Koh's multi-season commissioning

project that reimagines the violin concerto format for the 21st century and explores a range of socio-cultural topics relevant to American life.

Volume One spotlights composer and pianist **Vijay Iyer**'s *Trouble* and the world premiere recording of **Courtney Bryan**'s *Syzygy* performed with the **Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble** led by **Timothy Weiss**.

Today also marks the release of *Assembly*, the sixth movement from Vijay Iyer's *Trouble*, as a Cedille Records exclusive single. The release coincides with the unveiling of American artist **Carrie Mae Weems**' *The Cool Blue Wind* (2026), a permanent installation at the **Obama Presidential Center**. The work features an original soundtrack by Weems, Koh, Iyer, Somi, Craig Harris, and Jawwaad Taylor, titled *Obama Suite,* which incorporates the cadenza from *Assembly*.

youtube.com/watch?si=hhSo9UF87GEO4V0j&v=X9FPoLeyZqo&feature=youtu.be

Vijay Iyer's six movement concerto, *Trouble*—co-commissioned by the Ojai Music Festival, Cal Performances in Berkeley, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra (2017)—developed out of conversations between Koh and Iyer on the premise of the political climate following the 2016 election, the immigrant experience, and the high-profile injustices that have plagued U.S. history. A major impetus for the project was the story of Vincent Chin, the Chinese-American man who was beaten to death in a racially motivated assault by two white men in Detroit in 1982.

During a period plagued by economic recession and the decline of the auto industry, and fueled by anti-Japanese sentiment in the United States, Chin was misidentified as Japanese, attacked, and killed by Chrysler plant supervisor Ronald Ebens and his stepson, laid-off autoworker Michael Nitz, for "stealing" jobs. Koh was 5 years old at the time of this attack and remembers how this incident became a defining moment in Asian American history. With *Trouble*, Koh and Iyer used the violin concerto form to address racial violence through themes of birth, awareness, and collective resistance. Koh premiered the concerto with International Contemporary Ensemble, Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble, and conductor Steven Schick at the Ojai Music Festival two weeks before the 35th anniversary of Chin's death. Its title comes from Congressman John Lewis's phrase, "good trouble, necessary trouble," describing the practice of civil disobedience.

The first movement, *Erasure*, opens with the flute performing vulnerable, desolate-sounding melodies supported by low-moving bass notes on piano and eerie harmonics from the violin. The second movement moves between two-note ostinato figures swapped between violin and orchestra. The musicality becomes more urgent with each repetition and ends in a descending pattern drawn from a Phrygian dominant scale.

The centerpiece third movement, *For Vincent Chin,* is an expressively layered elegy, featuring pizzicato strings, plunky treble piano, and supportive ensemble, followed by the dance-like fourth movement, *Cozening*, with rhythms inspired by trap music. The chorale-like fifth movement, *Accretion*, interludes into the final section, *Assembly*, an all-encompassing, folk-like, episodic

finale with growing contrapuntal lines that gradually dissipate before building up once more: a metaphor for the political injustices shaping *Trouble*'s musical storytelling.

Composer and pianist Courtney Bryan was also present in Ojai for the premiere of her choral work *Yet Unheard*, dedicated to Sandra Bland. It was there that she met Koh, sparking a creative relationship that ultimately led to *Syzygy*.

Commissioned for Koh by the Chicago Sinfonietta and ARCO Collaborative for The American Concerto project in 2019, Bryan wrote a three-movement concerto celebrating women artists. Each movement is inspired by a specific work by one of Bryan's favorite artists: painter Alma Thomas (1891–1978); painter Frida Kahlo (1907–1954); and designer, architect, and artist Maya Ying Lin (b. 1959).

A term for the nearly straight-line configuration of three celestial bodies in a gravitational system (such as the sun, moon, and earth during a solar or lunar eclipse), "Syzygy" is the influential force behind the recurring theme of eclipse present in all three works of art. With Koh's violin as the connective musical thread guiding the listener throughout, Bryan's concerto unfolds as a journey through light and darkness.

It opens with I. *Alma Thomas: The Eclipse*, in which Koh's rhapsodic solo ascends to the violin's highest register before blossoming into an intricate dialogue with the winds. The warmth and lyricism of II. *Frida Kahlo: Tree of Hope, Keep Firm* give way to the rhythmic urgency and technical virtuosity of the finale, III. *Maya Lin: Eclipsed Time*. Reviewing the 2020 world premiere, the *Chicago Tribune* declared the work "a triumph for composer, soloist and the Sinfonietta."

Since launching The American Concerto in 2017, Koh has commissioned major new works from numerous composers, including Missy Mazzoli, Tyshawn Sorey, Nina Young, Lisa Bielawa, and Christopher Cerrone.

A 1997 graduate of the Oberlin Conservatory, Koh has maintained a decades-long relationship with the Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble and its director, Timothy Weiss. Returning frequently as a guest artist and collaborator, she has worked with generations of Oberlin musicians in performances, workshops, premieres, and recordings. Their partnership reflects a shared commitment to contemporary music and the development of new work.

A longstanding Cedille Records artist, Koh has released 16 solo albums, including the Grammy Award-winning *Alone Together*. Other notable releases include the critically acclaimed *Bach & Beyond* series (2012, 2015, 2020), which the *Chicago Tribune* called an "epic traversal of solo violin repertoire" and "a monumental achievement"; *Limitless* (2019), featuring collaborations with leading composer-performers; and *Saariaho X Koh* (2018), which includes world-premiere recordings of works by Kaija Saariaho. Koh's debut Cedille album, *Solo Chaconnes* (2002), paired Bach's Second Partita with works by Richard Barth and Max Reger; she has also appeared as a featured soloist on numerous collaborative Cedille recordings.

The American Concerto, Vol. 1
CEDILLE RECORDS
CDR 90000 244

Jennifer Koh, Violin
Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble
Timothy Weiss, Conductor

VIJAY IYER (b. 1971)
Trouble (31:07)

Trouble for Violin and Chamber Orchestra

1. Prelude: Erasure
2. Normale
3. For Vincent Chin
4. Cozening
5. Interlude: Accretion
6. Assembly

COURTNEY BRYAN (b. 1983)
Syzygy (18:05) **WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

I. Alma Thomas: The Eclipse
II. Frida Kahlo: Tree of Hope, Keep Firm
III. Maya Ying Lin: Eclipsed Time

TT: (49:13)

ABOUT JENNIFER KOH

Grammy Award-winning violinist Jennifer Koh is celebrated for her commanding performances and dedication to both traditional and contemporary repertoire. Equally at home in works from Bach to today's composers, she is recognized for her dazzling virtuosity, breadth of musical curiosity, and fearless approach to programming. Koh has premiered more than 100 works and developed groundbreaking commissioning projects that have redefined the contemporary violin repertoire. Named *Musical America's* 2016 Instrumentalist of the Year, Koh has won the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, Concert Artists Guild Competition, and an Avery Fisher Career Grant. She has a BA in English literature from Oberlin College and studied at the Curtis Institute, where she worked with Jaime Laredo and Felix Galimir. She is an active lecturer, teacher, and recording artist for Cedille Records. Koh is Artistic Director of the Fortas Chamber Music Concerts in Washington, DC and Artistic Director of ARCO Collaborative, an artist-driven nonprofit that commissions new works such as those comprised in *The American Concerto, Volume One* and *Alone Together*. To learn more, visit jenniferkoh.com.

ABOUT VIJAY IYER

VIJAY IYER has carved a unique path as an influential, prolific, shape-shifting presence in 21st-century music. A composer and pianist active in and revered across multiple musical communities, Iyer has created a consistently innovative, emotionally resonant body of work over the last three decades, earning him a place as one of the leading music-makers of his generation. His honors include a MacArthur Fellowship, Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, United States Artist Fellowship, three Grammy nominations, and the Alpert Award in the Arts.

His newest albums include *Fifteen* (Nonesuch, 2026), an all-star collective with composer-performers Henry Threadgill and Dafnis Prieto; *Defiant Life* (ECM, 2025), his second suite of duets with visionary composer-trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith; *Compassion* (ECM, 2024), featuring his celebrated trio with drummer Tyshawn Sorey and bassist Linda May Han Oh; *Thereupon* (Pi Recordings, 2025), the long-awaited return of an all-star collective comprising Iyer, Sorey, and saxophonist Steve Lehman; and *Love in Exile* (Verve, 2023), his Grammy-nominated collaboration with Arooj Aftab and Shahzad Ismaily. *The New York Times* observed, "Iyer's music has always been both intelligent and unpretentious, complex without being opaque; [he] ponders a phrase with obsessive rumination, unveiling layers of shifting, subtle emotion, before letting it fly with joyous abandon." Iyer has received a MacArthur Fellowship, a Doris Duke Artist Award, and three Grammy nominations. He is a professor at Harvard University. To learn more, visit vijay-iyer.com.

ABOUT COURTNEY BRYAN

A New Orleans native, Courtney Bryan is "a pianist and composer of panoramic interests" (*New York Times*). A Steinway Artist and 2023 MacArthur Fellow, she currently serves as composer-in-residence with the New Haven Symphony Orchestra.

Recent premieres include *Dreaming* (Freedom Sounds), performed by the International Contemporary Ensemble at New York's Kaufman Music Center; *Visual Rhythms*, a new art-inspired orchestral piece for the Jacksonville Symphony; *House of Pianos*, which Bryan premiered in 2023 with the LA Phil New Music Group (chamber ensemble version) and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (full orchestra version); and *Gathering Song* (libretto by Tazewell Thompson), composed for bass-baritone Ryan Speedo Green and the New York Philharmonic.

Her compositions have been performed by Opera Philadelphia (Composer in Residence, 2022–2024), the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra (Creative Partner, 2020–2023), Jacksonville Symphony (Mary Carr Patton Composer-In-Residence, 2018–2020), London Sinfonietta, Orchestra of St. Luke's, Chicago Sinfonietta, Quince Ensemble as part of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra MusicNOW series, American Composers Orchestra, Colorado Springs Philharmonic, La Jolla Symphony and Chorus, New York Jazzharmonic, Spektral Quartet, and Talea Ensemble. To learn more, visit courtneybryan.com.

ABOUT TIMOTHY WEISS

Conductor Timothy Weiss has earned acclaim for his performances and bold programming throughout the United States and abroad. His repertoire in contemporary music is vast and

fearless, including contemporary masterworks and an impressive number of recordings, premieres, and commissions. He is the 2025 recipient of the Ditson Conductor's Award in recognition of his exceptional commitment to the performance of works by American composers. In 2024, his premiere recording of orchestral works by Missy Mazzoli with the Arctic Philharmonic earned a Grammy nomination.

For more than three decades, Weiss has directed the Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble (CME), bringing the group to a level of artistry and virtuosity in performance that rivals the finest new music groups. He earned the Adventurous Programming Award from the League of American Orchestras for his work with the Oberlin CME.

He also serves as faculty member and director of the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble at the Aspen Music Festival and School. Additionally, he is a co-director and founder of the Zohn-Collective, a flexible contemporary music collective that produces and performs artist-driven projects generated by its members. He remains active as a guest conductor in the U.S. and abroad and continues to be a regular guest of the Grossman Ensemble in Chicago, the Manson Ensemble at the Royal Academy of Music in London, and the Arctic Philharmonic in Norway, an ensemble for which he served as Artistic Director for six years.

ABOUT OBERLIN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC ENSEMBLE

An "experimental haven" and "hotbed of contemporary-classical players" (*The New York Times*), the Oberlin Conservatory of Music cultivates innovation in its students. Under the direction of Professor Timothy Weiss, the Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble's (CME) high level of performance has garnered considerable acclaim. In its six annual full-concert cycles, CME performs music of all contemporary styles and genres: from minimalism and serialism to electroacoustic, cross-genre, mixed media, and beyond.

CME has worked with and premiered pieces by many prominent composers from a variety of backgrounds, including Vijay Iyer, Stephen Hartke, George Crumb, Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Helmut Lachenmann, David Lang, Joan Tower, Carlos Simon, Cindy McTee, Courtney Bryan, Alex Paxton, among many others. CME also regularly premieres works by prominent Oberlin faculty, student, and alumni composers.

Many noted contemporary music icons perform as soloists with CME, including Jennifer Koh ('97), Claire Chase ('01), Tony Arnold ('90), Marilyn Nonken, Stephen Drury, Steven Schick, and Ursula Oppens. The ensemble also features outstanding students as soloists each year.

CME routinely performs in Cleveland and tours the United States. In recent years, it has performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Roulette, Winter Garden, Miller Theater, Merkin Concert Hall, DiMenna Center, Harvard University, Benaroya Hall, Palace of Fine Arts, Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall, and the Cleveland Museum of Art.

The group is featured on a number of commercial recordings, including John Luther Adams' *In the White Silence* (New World Records), Lewis Nielson's *Écritures: St. Francis Preaches to the Birds* (Centaur Records), and several releases on the Oberlin Music label.

Scores of powerhouse new music performers and ensembles began their careers as members of CME, including the multiple Grammy Award-winning sextet Eighth Blackbird and the International Contemporary Ensemble.

ABOUT CEDILLE RECORDS

Launched in November 1989 by James Ginsburg, 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 nonprofit record label, Cedille's mission is to produce and disseminate audiophile recordings presenting the finest classical music performers and composers in and from Chicago. The recordings further the careers and legacies of these Chicago artists as Cedille invests not only in the recordings but also in the artists represented on them. The label's catalog of more than 200 front-line albums brims with attractive, off-the-beaten-path repertoire from the Baroque era to the present day, including world premieres of well over 400 classical compositions. Works from the classical canon, when they do appear, are usually heard in particularly imaginative programs. Cedille never removes albums from its catalog, and each recording is a permanent documentation of the artists' work. With more than 180 Chicago artists and ensembles, over 80 making their professional recording debuts on the label, Cedille brings the area's most significant classical music artists to a worldwide listening public. Cedille recordings are available on CD, as MP3 and hi-resolution FLAC downloads, and on all major streaming platforms. Learn more about Cedille Records and explore the label's catalog at cedillerecords.org

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