

World Premiere Recordings of Rare Chamber Music by Marc Blitzstein



Marc Blitzstein: *First Life* Another Coup by Seminal *Other Minds* of San Francisco

Charles Amirkhanian, Executive and Artistic Director of **Other Minds** (“OM”), a trailblazing organization based in San Francisco dedicated to generating, nurturing, and preserving 20th and 21st century music, has announced the release on **12 May 2009** of *First Life* (OM 1017), a collection of **world premiere recordings** of hitherto virtually unknown compositions for solo piano and for string quartet by American composer **Marc Blitzstein**. Three works for solo piano are performed by pianist and composers’ muse **Sarah Cahill**, and two compositions, comprising Blitzstein’s complete known output for string quartet, feature the **Del Sol String Quartet**. “The populist political ideals Marc Blitzstein had embraced by the late 1930s in such works as *The Cradle Will Rock* led him to abandon the more abstract language of his early chamber music as too inaccessible,” says Amirkhanian, “but to our ears these pieces, which sat on a shelf for over 80 years, are beautifully crafted and appealingly experimental for their time. We find them exciting and had to record them because their contrarian voice clearly belongs to an Other Mind!” Amirkhanian’s relationship with Stephen and Christopher Davis, Blitzstein’s nephews and the executors of his estate, enabled OM to gain access to the still unpublished scores, which have lain in the archive of the Blitzstein estate since his untimely death in 1964 at the age of 58.



Photo courtesy of Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research

Written before the premiere of his legendary political musical *The Cradle Will Rock* and his highly-regarded opera *Regina*, Blitzstein’s chamber music unquestionably deserves a wider audience. Yet these scores, by the only American to study composition with both Arnold Schoenberg and Nadia Boulanger, are largely unknown and have rarely been played. Recorded at Skywalker Sound in Marin County, California, *First Life* continues an effort by OM to shed light on these forgotten treasures, an unknown aspect of Blitzstein’s genius.

Founded in 1992, **Other Minds** is a leading proponent of new and experimental music in all its forms, bringing together artists and audiences of diverse traditions, generations and cultural backgrounds. By fostering cross-cultural exchange and creative dialogue, and by encouraging exploration of areas in new music seldom touched upon by mainstream music institutions, OM is committed to expanding and



reshaping the definition of what constitutes “serious music.” From festival concerts, film screenings, and the commissioning of new works, to producing and releasing CDs, to weekly radio broadcasts (streamed on otherminds.org/mfom) and archival preservation of thousands of concerts and composer interviews which OM distributes free at radiOM.org, OM has become one of the world’s major conservators of new music’s ecology.



Photo by Marianne La Rochelle

American pianist **Sarah Cahill** specializes in new American music as well as the American experimental tradition, and has commissioned, premiered, and recorded numerous compositions for solo piano. Composers who have dedicated music to her include John Adams, Terry Riley, Frederic Rzewski, Pauline Oliveros, Kyle Gann, Andrea Morricone, and Evan Ziporyn, and she has also premiered pieces by Lou Harrison, Julia Wolfe, Ingram Marshall, Toshi Ichianagi, Ursula Mamlok, George Lewis, Leo Ornstein, and many others. Most of Cahill’s albums are on the New Albion label. She has also recorded for the Tzadik, CRI, New World, Albany, Cold Blue, and Artifact labels. She is

currently preparing recordings of music by Leo Ornstein and Mamoru Fujieda. Her radio program *Then & Now* can be heard every Sunday evening on San Francisco radio station KALW, 91.7 FM.

The **Del Sol String Quartet**, two-time national winner of the Chamber Music America/ASCAP First Place Award for Adventurous Programming, has for over 15 years served as a champion of innovative interactions with audiences, composers, and fellow artists. The group has collaborated with choreographers and visual artists as well as such composers as Tan Dun, Chinary Ung, Peter Sculthorpe, Gabriela Lena Frank, and Daniel Bernard Roumain. The Quartet’s recordings include OM’s previous release *Ring of Fire* (OM 1016), featuring music



Ring of Fire (OM 1016)

by 8 Pacific Rim composers, and the ground-breaking *George Antheil: The Complete Works for String Quartet* (OM 1008). The Quartet's active involvement in community engagement has touched the lives of over 30,000 people over the last decade, in programs conducted in California, New Mexico, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Arkansas. Members of the Del Sol String Quartet: Kate Stenberg and Rick Shinozaki, violins; Charlton Lee, viola; Hannah Addario-Berry, cello.

Links: www.otherminds.org; www.sarahcahill.com; www.delsolquartet.com.

Repertoire on *Marc Blitzstein: First Life*

Piano Sonata (1927)
Piano Percussion Music (1929)
Scherzo, "Bourgeois at Play" (1930)
Quartet for Strings, "Italian" (1930)
Serenade for String Quartet (1932)

For more information about *Marc Blitzstein: First Life* and Other Minds, call 831-620-1332.

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