



JENNIFER KOH

---

BACH & BEYOND  
PART 3

**CEDILLE**  
3

BACH  
—  
HARBISON  
—  
BERIO



# JENNIFER KOH BACH & BEYOND

## PART 3

### DISC 1

#### **JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)**

##### **Sonata No. 2 in A minor, BWV 1003 (24:48)**

1. I. Grave (4:13)
2. II. Fuga (7:59)
3. III. Andante (6:00)
4. IV. Allegro (6:20)

#### **LUCIANO BERIO (1925–2003)**

5. Sequenza VIII for solo violin (15:40)

### DISC 2

#### **JOHN HARBISON (b. 1938)**

##### ***For Violin Alone\** (20:48)**

1. I. Ground (3:40)
2. II. Dance 1 (3:10)
3. III. Air (3:12)
4. IV. March (2:32)
5. V. Dance 2 (4:14)
6. VI. Duet (1:59)
7. VII. Epilogue (1:40)

#### **J.S. BACH**

##### **Sonata No. 3 in C major, BWV 1005 (24:43)**

8. I. Adagio (5:25)
9. II. Fuga (10:30)
10. III. Largo (3:29)
11. IV. Allegro assai (5:02)

TT: (86:23)

\*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

## PROGRAM NOTES

by Patrick Castillo

The final installment of Jennifer Koh's *Bach & Beyond* series of albums featuring music for solo violin was produced at a time of intensified solitude. As COVID-19 continues to ravage our global community, we remain isolated, staying home to ensure the health and safety of our neighbors, our loved ones, and ourselves.

"Sei solo," proclaims the title page of Bach's autograph manuscript to his Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin: "Six solos" — or, perhaps, "You are alone." This poignant wordplay, largely dismissed by Bach scholars but intriguing nevertheless, is thought to refer to the composer's solitude following the death of his wife, Maria Barbara. Bach dated the title page 1720, the year of her death. It may seem far-fetched to surmise that the Sonatas and Partitas are the widowed composer's tombeau for his deceased wife; but consider, too, that the correct Italian for "six solos" is "sei soli." Such an error in grammar would be a rare slip for an intellect as exacting as Bach's.

Whatever his intention, Bach's Sonatas and Partitas constitute a majestic monument to solitude. From a single melodic instrument, Bach fashions exquisite counterpoint and polyphony and conjures a kaleidoscopic array of instrumental textures and expressive characters. Each of the three Sonatas features a fugue, the form that, in refracting a modest fragment into a brilliant mosaic, most gloriously manifests Bach's guiding compositional principle of "all from one and all in one."

The Grave that begins the Sonata No. 2 in A minor, BWV 1003, despite its sobriety, nevertheless glorifies the

instrument with its florid, fanciful writing. A terse nine-note subject drives the stern Fuga, the Sonata's center of gravity; Bach develops this figure in short order, with an urgency befitting the fugue's austere character. A lovely Andante follows, offering the listener tender solace in the fugue's wake. Here Bach spins music of beguiling sincerity, pacing the tuneful melody with a pulsing heartbeat of repeated notes. That pulse is transfigured in a motoric flow of 16<sup>th</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> notes in the Allegro finale.

A gently rocking, dotted-rhythm gesture blossoms, in wondrous fashion, into the opening Adagio of the Sonata No. 3 in C major, BWV 1005. This movement is one of those quiet miracles in Bach's oeuvre (think of the C-major Prelude of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* or the opening of the First Cello Suite) in which a whole world comes into being from the most unassuming musical idea. The Adagio spawns one of the colossal accomplishments to be found among the six Sonatas and Partitas: the second movement Fuga stands nearly shoulder-to-shoulder with the D-minor Partita's immortal Ciaccona. The fugue is, at first glance, a seemingly affable thing, but slowly overwhelms the listener with its immense expressive power (and the violinist with its demands on both virtuosity and sheer stamina). It is the most complex of the fugues among the three Sonatas, displaying the full gamut of contrapuntal

techniques; halfway through, Bach restarts the engine with the subject in inversion. A bewitching Largo and fetchingly rustic Allegro assai finale complete the Sonata.

Bach's homage to solitude finds a distant echo in John Harbison's *For Violin Alone*, composed in 2015 for Jennifer Koh. For Harbison, Bach has been a vital spiritual forebear since his youth. In a lecture to Tanglewood students, Harbison described the assemblage of his musical cosmos:

Here is how it went for me: in adolescence Mozart string quintets and Bach cantatas, Stravinsky *Symphony of Psalms*, Bartók Concerto for Orchestra... Kern and Gershwin... Oscar Peterson, later Horace Silver... During college: more Stravinsky, some Hindemith and Dallapiccola. Bach and Mozart even more preponderant. Discovery of Monk and Parker.... After college:... Bach still central, due to my performances of over forty of his cantatas...

*For Violin Alone* bears a closer kinship to Bach's Partitas than to the Sonatas. It comprises six movements and an Epilogue,

resembling the Baroque dance suite rather than the four-movement *sonata da chiesa* (church sonata) model of the three Sonatas. The opening movement, the assertive Ground — a series of five successive recurrences of a central theme, continuously varied — gives way to the first of the two Dance movements. At the work's center are the featherweight Air, its sinewy melodic lines marked alternately *semplice* and *grazioso*, *cantabile*, and a contrasting March: a brash thing punctuated by *misterioso*, *timido*, and *ansioso* utterances.

Luciano Berio's *Sequenza VIII* (1976) for solo violin is the eighth in the composer's signature series of 14 works for different solo instruments (including voice). The *Sequenzas*, writes Berio scholar David Osmond-Smith, "[make] explicit Berio's fascination with virtuosity, understood not merely as technical dexterity, but as a manifestation of an agile musical intelligence that relishes the challenge of complexity."

Berio likened the composition of *Sequenza VIII* to "paying a personal debt to the violin, which to me is one of the most subtle and complex of instruments.... While almost all of the other *Sequenzas* develop to an extreme degree a very limited choice of instrumental possibilities, *Sequenza VIII* deals with a larger and more global view of the violin and can be listened to as a development of instrumental gestures."

Berio's paeon to the violin likewise pays a debt to Bach. The composer writes:

*Sequenza VIII* is built around two notes (A and B), which — as in a chaconne — act as a compass in the work's rather diversified and elaborate itinerary, where polyphony is no longer virtual but real, where the soloist must make the listener constantly aware of the history behind each instrumental gesture. *Sequenza VIII*, therefore, becomes inevitably a tribute to that musical apex that is the Ciaccona from Johann Sebastian Bach's Partita in D minor, where — historically — past, present, and future violin techniques coexist.

With its connection to the Ciaccona, Berio's *Sequenza VIII* makes for a fitting part of the ending to Jennifer Koh's *Bach & Beyond* recording cycle, whose first installment was anchored by the Partita in D minor.

© 2020 Patrick Castillo

*Patrick Castillo leads a multifaceted career as a composer, performer, writer, and educator.*

## JENNIFER KOH

Violinist Jennifer Koh is recognized for her intense, commanding performances, delivered with dazzling virtuosity and technical assurance. A forward-thinking artist, she is dedicated to exploring a broad and eclectic repertoire, while promoting equity and inclusivity in classical music. She has expanded the contemporary violin repertoire through a wide range of commissioning projects and has premiered more than 100 works written especially for her. Her quest for the new and unusual, sense of endless curiosity, and ability to lead and inspire a host of multidisciplinary collaborators truly set her apart.

Ms. Koh's series include *Alone Together*, an online commissioning project and performances series in support of composers during the COVID-19 crisis; *The New American Concerto*, which invites a diverse collective of composers to examine socio-cultural topics relevant to contemporary American life through the form of the violin concerto; *Limitless* (also released on Cedille Records) which explores the relationship between composer and performer through duo works played by Ms. Koh and the composers themselves; *Bach and Beyond*, which traces the history of the solo violin

repertoire from Bach's sonatas and partitas to pieces by 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century composers; and *Shared Madness*, comprising short solo works that explore virtuosity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, commissioned from over 30 composers.

Ms. Koh has appeared with orchestras worldwide, among them the New York, Los Angeles, and Helsinki Philharmonics; Cleveland, Mariinsky, Minnesota, Philadelphia, and Philharmonia (London) Orchestras; and Atlanta, Baltimore, BBC, Chicago, Cincinnati, National, New World, NHK, RAI (Torino), and Singapore Symphonies. Named *Musical America's* 2016 Instrumentalist of the Year, she 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 extensively with Jaime Laredo and Felix Galimir. She is an active lecturer, teacher, and recording artist for Cedille Records and is the Artistic Director and Founder of the non-profit *ARCO Collaborative*.

# CREDITS

**Producer and Engineer** Judith Sherman

**Engineering and Editing Assistance**

Jeanne Velonis

**Mastering** Bill Maylone

**Recorded**

**Bach: *Sonata No. 2 in A minor, BWV 1003***

September 16–17, 2017, American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York

**Bach: *Sonata No. 3 in C major, BWV 1005***

September 8–9, 2019, Concert Hall of the Performing Arts Center, SUNY Purchase, Purchase, NY

**Berio: *Sequenza VIII***

September 17–18, 2017, American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York

**Harbison: *For Violin Alone***

September 9–10, 2019, Concert Hall of the Performing Arts Center, SUNY Purchase, Purchase, NY

**Graphic Design** Bark Design

**Photos** Juergen Frank

**Publishers**

Berio: *Sequenza VIII* © 1976 Universal Edition

Harbison: *For Violin Alone* © 2015 Associated Music Publishers, Inc. (BMI)

Cedille Records is a trademark of Cedille Chicago, NFP, a not-for-profit organization devoted to promoting the finest musicians and ensembles in the Chicago area. Cedille Chicago's activities are supported in part by contributions and grants from individuals, foundations, corporations, and government agencies including The MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince, The Negaunee Foundation, Sage Foundation, Irving Harris Foundation, and the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency. This project is partially supported by a CityArts Grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events.



CDR 90000 199 ©&©2020 Cedille Records,  
trademark of Cedille Chicago, NFP 1205  
W. Balmoral Ave, Chicago IL 60640 USA •  
773.989.2515 tel • 773.989.2517 fax  
[www.cedillerecords.org](http://www.cedillerecords.org)

# CEDILLE PRODUCERS CIRCLE

Honoring the generosity and loyalty of those individuals and foundations who have supported our recordings through their repeated, major annual gifts to Cedille Chicago

Anonymous  
Julie and Roger Baskes  
Beech Street Foundation  
The Steven C. Calicchio Foundation  
Kristina Entner and Edward Malone  
Marian and M. Carr Ferguson  
Frances and Henry Fogel  
Sue and Paul Freehling  
Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation  
Jane Ginsburg and George Spera  
Ruth Bader Ginsburg  
Susan and Sanford Greenberg  
Barbara Greis and Howard Gottlieb  
Irving Harris Foundation  
Barbara Haws and William Josephson  
Andrew and Irma Hilton Foundation  
The Julian Family Foundation

Barbara Julius and Marc Silberberg  
Patricia Kenney and Gregory O'Leary  
Christine and Bill Landuyt  
Eva Lichtenberg and Arnold Tobin  
The MacArthur Fund for Arts  
and Culture at Prince  
Graci and Dennis McGillicuddy  
Mesirow Financial  
Lori and Steven Mesirow  
The Negaunee Foundation  
Kathleen Peratis  
Rachel Barton Pine and Gregory Pine  
Pumpkin Foundation / Carol & Joe Reich  
Jim Rogers  
Beverly and Bill Rosoff  
Sage Foundation  
Claire and Edward Stiepleman  
Jia Zhao and Hongyi Chen