

Cedille Records
5255 N. Lakewood Ave.
Chicago, IL 60640-2220
(773) 989-2515
(773) 989-2517 fax
www.cedillerecords.org

Press contact: Nat Silverman
Nathan J. Silverman Co./PR
1830 Sherman Ave., Suite 401
Evanston, IL 60201-3773
Phone (847) 328-4292
Fax (847) 328-4317
Email: natsilv@aol.com

News

For release: November 2001

VIOLINIST JENNIFER KOH SURVEYS CHACONNES

Solo Debut CD Traces Bach's Influence on an Intriguing Musical Form

For her first solo CD, violinist Jennifer Koh performs Bach's Partita No. 2 in D minor for Solo Violin, with its landmark Chaconne, and Bach-inspired chaconnes by late-Romantic composers Richard Barth and Max Reger.

Ms. Koh, an international concert artist and award winner who studies with Jaime Laredo at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute, selected the works for the program, titled *Solo Chaconnes* (Cedille Records 90000 060). To accompany Bach's Partita (1720), she chose Barth's Ciacona in B minor for Solo Violin, Op. 21 (1908), and Reger's Chaconne in G minor for Solo Violin, Op. 117, No. 4 (1912). The new disc is apparently the only available CD recording of either work.

"This is an intriguing setting for the Partita, a work typically found on all-Bach recordings or, occasionally, on recital grab bags," says Cedille producer Jim Ginsburg. "*Solo Chaconnes* invites the listener to explore this singular musical form across the centuries, starting with Ms. Koh's stellar performance of what is doubtlessly the epitome of the genre."

Ms. Koh calls the recording "an extremely personal project." She describes Bach's Partita as "one of the most naked pieces" in the violin repertoire, exposing the totality of the performer's technique and interpretive skills. "The violinist is, in many ways, reaching the boundaries of the instrument and overcoming those limits," she says.

Bach did not invent the chaconne, which is based on a South American dance brought to Spain after the New World conquests of the late 1500s.

Bach's Chaconne, the monumental conclusion to the Partita No. 2, is as long as the preceding four movements combined. It's an ingenious series of 30 variations on a simple chord progression. In a letter to Clara Schumann, Brahms said Bach's piece "is for me one of the most wonderful, incomprehensible pieces of music . . . a whole world of the deepest thoughts and the most powerful feelings."

Barth (1850-1923) was a violinist, a member of Brahms' circle, and a Brahms biographer. His lush 1908 Chaconne reflects the virtuoso violin techniques of the post-Paganini era and speaks in a rich tonal language reminiscent of Brahms.

- more -

Reger (1873-1916) began his systematic study of Bach's music while still in his teens. He aimed to revive the contrapuntal technique of the Baroque masters. Like Bach, he wrote chorale preludes for organ and many preludes and fugues for solo keyboard as well as for solo violin. His music combines the chromatic language of the late-19th century with Baroque and Classical forms. Reger's fascinating Chaconne exhibits a dense post-Wagnerian harmonic palette that stretches the instrument's limits.

A Chicago-area native, Ms. Koh took first prize at the Chicago Symphony-sponsored Illinois Young Performers Competition in 1992, when she was 15. Two years later, she won the top prize and all of the special prizes given at the 1994 International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow and received a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant in 1995.

Reviewing her recent Carnegie Hall debut, *The New York Times* said she "played with lucid phrasing, sensitivity and suppleness . . . Ms. Koh drew a lustrous tone from her fine Stradivari, yet kept her sound clear and focused." *The Strad*, in its January 2000 "Stars of the Next Decade" feature, called her "a risk-taking, high-octane player of the kind who grabs the listener by the ears and refused to let go . . . A scorching talent that should on no account be missed."

The new Cedille disc is Jennifer Koh's first solo recital CD. She has previously recorded concertos by Nielsen on the Danish Kontrapunkt label and Uuno Klami for BIS. Her recording of the violin concerto by Gian Carlo Menotti, from the 2001 Spoleto festival with Richard Hickox conducting, will appear on the Chandos label next year.

Cedille Records (pronounced say-DEE) is dedicated to showcasing Chicago's most noteworthy classical artists and attractive yet unjustly neglected repertoire. The label is an arm of the nonprofit Chicago Classical Recording Foundation.

Cedille CDs are distributed to retailers by Qualiton Imports and are available at finer record stores nationally. For a free catalog and the whereabouts of local retail outlets, consumers can contact Cedille Records, 5255 N. Lakewood Ave., Chicago, IL 60640-2220; phone (773) 989-2515; E-mail info@cedillerecords.org; www.cedillerecords.org.

###

SOLO CHACONNES

Bach: Partita No. 2 in D minor for Solo Violin, BWV 1004 (31: 42)
Barth: Ciacona in B minor for Solo Violin, Op. 21 (13:12)
Reger: Chaconne in G minor for Solo Violin, Op. 117, No. 4 (12:12)

Jennifer Koh, violin
Cedille Records CDR 90000 060