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News

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VIOLINIST RACHEL BARTON PINE PERFORMS REPERTOIRE OF AMERICA'S FIRST CLASSICAL SUPERSTAR

CD Tribute to Maud Powell Illuminates Century-Old Gems from America and Europe

For her eighth and newest recording for Cedille Records, violinist Rachel Barton Pine celebrates the illustrious career, legendary musicianship, and wide-ranging repertoire of violinist Maud Powell (1867-1920), America's first classical music superstar.

On *American Virtuosa: Tribute to Maud Powell*, Ms. Pine and pianist Matthew Hagle perform 18 works by 17 composers (Cedille Records CDR 90000 097). Most of the pieces were dedicated to or arranged by Powell.

"Rachel Barton Pine, a musical explorer in her own right, is among the first to perform Maud Powell's transcriptions and music dedicated to her since Powell herself played them," writes Karen A. Shaffer, the CD's program annotator and the president and founder of the Maud Powell Society for Music and Education.

Pine and Hagle performed a concert of Maud Powell repertoire at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. in February 2006. "Pine displays a power and confidence that puts her in the top echelon of recitalists," wrote *Washington Post* reviewer Gail Wein. "Channeling the spirit of Powell, she played Dvorak with fire and passion . . . and gave Sibelius a sensational twist."

Charles T. Downey, a contributor to the Washington, D.C., cultural blog www.ionarts.com, called the presentation “a fascinating program” that demonstrated “the range of technical demands that Powell confidently took onto her shoulders. . . . Rachel Barton Pine offered a most fitting tribute to her memory.”

Born in the frontier town of Peru, Ill., Powell was a child prodigy who became an international sensation in adulthood. She sought to spur the development of America’s own art music; bring attention to American composers, including women and those of African descent; and develop stimulating recital programs that would engage and inspire audiences at all levels of musical sophistication in urban and rural areas. In 1904, she became the first instrumentalist to record for the Victor Company’s Celebrity Artist Series (Red Seal label).

“Rachel Barton Pine and Maud Powell are kindred spirits, separated by a century’s time,” said James Ginsburg, Cedille Records president. “Beyond their charisma and remarkable talents as violinists, they share similar musical and cultural values, including a missionary zeal for introducing classical music to new audiences.”

Much of the CD comprises music dedicated to Maud Powell by American composers and her own transcriptions of American works. Together, this body of work “nearly chronicles the evolution of American music,” Shaffer observes.

The American works include Amy Beach’s *Romance for Violin and Piano*, Op. 23 (1893); Marion Eugenie Bauer’s *Up the Ocklawaha, Tone Picture for Violin*, Op. 6 (1912); Carl Venth’s *Aria* (1911); H.P. Danks’s *Silver Threads Among the Gold* (1873); Herman Bellstedt, Jr.’s *Caprice on Dixie for Unaccompanied Violin* (1905); Henry Holden Huss’s *Romance* (circa 1906); Harry Mathena Gilbert’s *Marionettes* (1911); Cecil Burleigh’s *Four Rocky Mountain Sketches*, Op. 11 (1913); Max Liebling’s *Fantasia on Sousa Themes* (1905), and J. Rosamond Johnson’s *Nobody Knows the Trouble I See* (1917).

Australian-born American composer Percy Grainger transcribed his song *Molly on the Shore* for Powell.

Powell's advocacy of black composers and music reflecting the African-American experience is represented by her arrangements of the aforementioned Johnson piece and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *Deep River*, Op. 59, No. 10 (1904).

The CD also includes Powell's arrangements of works by Dvořák, Sibelius, Chopin, Palmgren, and Massenet. "The pieces [she] chose to transcribe," Shaffer writes, "are musical gems, illustrative of each composer's musical character, period, style, and nationality in distilled form."

Pine's new CD also makes an ideal companion to the Naxos Historical label's recent four-CD series of remastered, 78 rpm Victor acoustical recordings of Powell's own studio performances.

Pine has appeared as soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, and Montreal Symphony, among other leading orchestras. She has worked closely with conductors Charles Dutoit, Zubin Mehta, Erich Leinsdorf, Neeme Jarvi, and Semyon Bychkov. Notable collaborations include pairings with Daniel Barenboim, Christoph Eschenbach, and Mark O'Connor. She holds prizes from several of the world's major competitions, including a gold medal at the 1992 J.S. Bach International Violin Competition in Leipzig. For more on Ms. Pine, visit her Web site, www.rachelbartonpine.com.

Matthew Hagle has been Pine's principal collaborator since 1999. They have performed around the U.S. and on National Public Radio's "Performance Today" and American Public Media's "St. Paul Sunday" programs. He is a graduate of the Peabody Conservatory and Yale University and was the recipient of a Fulbright Grant to study piano in London. *Clavier* magazine has praised the "rare clarity and sweetness" of his playing. *Piano and Keyboard* called his musicianship "outstanding."

The Maud Powell Society's Web site is www.maudpowell.org.

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. Cedille Records is distributed by Allegro Corporation in the U.S. and Canada.

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American Virtuosa: Tribute to Maud Powell
Cedille Records 90000 097

- Amy Beach: Romance for Violin and Piano (7:31)
Percy Aldridge Grainger: Molly on the Shore (3:15)
Antonín Dvořák: Songs My Mother Sang (1:49)
Jean Sibelius: *Musette* from the Orchestral Suite King Christian II (1:45)
Marion Eugénie Bauer: Up the Ocklawaha, Tone Poem Picture for Violin, Op. 6 (5:30)
Frederic Chopin: "Minute" Waltz, Op. 64, No. 1 (2:00)
Carl Venth: Aria (5:05)
Selim Palmgren: May Night (2:14)
Samuel Coleridge-Taylor: Deep River, Op. 58, No. 10 (4:46)
Antonín Dvořák: *Humoreske*, Op. 101, No. 7 (3:42)
H.P. Danks: *Silver Threads Among the Gold* (3:06)
Herman Bellstedt, Jr.: Caprice on Dixie for Unaccompanied Violin (3:41)
Henry Holden Huss: Romance (5:19)
Harry Mathena Gilbert: Marionettes (3:00)
Cecil Burleigh: Four Rocky Mountain Sketches, Op. 11 (9:56)
Jules Massenet: Twilight from *Poèmes Pastorale* (2:22)
Max Liebling: Fantasia on Sousa Themes (7:46)
J. Rosamond Johnson: Nobody Knows the Trouble I See (4:43)

Rachel Barton Pine, violin
Matthew Hagle, piano