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Music & Entertainment Marketing

VIOLINIST RACHEL BARTON AND THE CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA,
CARLOS KALMAR CONDUCTING, TO RELEASE FIRST-EVER RECORDING PAIRING THE
BRAHMS VIOLIN CONCERTO WITH THE WORK THAT MOST INSPIRED IT:
JOSEPH JOACHIM'S 'HUNGARIAN' CONCERTO,
IN STORES JUNE 3

Barton's 5th Cedille Records Recording Underscores The Close Artistic Bond
And Friendship Between Brahms And Joachim

Violinist Performs Joachim's Cadenza For The Brahms Concerto,
With A Bonus Track Featuring Her Own Cadenza For The Work

Noted American violinist Rachel Barton reunites violin concertos by two Romantic masters who were close friends and artistic collaborators — composer Johannes Brahms and violinist and composer Joseph Joachim — in a new recording with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Carlos Kalmar. The recording, the first to pair Brahms's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D Major, Op. 77, and Joachim's Violin Concerto No. 2 in D minor, Op. 11, *In the Hungarian Style*, will be released by Chicago-based Cedille Records on June 3, 2003. The 2-CD release will be sold at the price of a single disc.

Barton's new recording illuminates many fascinating musical connections and reaffirms her reputation as one of the most perceptive and committed musicians before the public today. This project continues Barton's long standing relationship with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, with which she has performed many times since her debut with them at the age of 10. She first collaborated with conductor Carlos Kalmar in live performances of the Joachim concerto with Chicago's Grant Park Orchestra shortly before they made this recording with the Chicago Symphony.

"I have been playing the Brahms concerto since I was 14, and every time I return to it, it inspires me with new thoughts and ideas," Rachel Barton says. "My interpretation has grown over the years as I have performed it, researched the work, studied Brahms's chamber music and symphonies, and consulted with Joachim's pedagogical descendants. I have always been struck by its grandeur and seriousness, its massive scope, that really inexorable quality. It seems to reflect the vastness of creation. This is captured in my interpretation, perhaps most notably in my choice of tempi. Preparing the Joachim *Hungarian* Concerto, which had such a strong influence on Brahms, reinforced my convictions about my approach to the Brahms Concerto. Getting to know Joachim's music was so eye-opening, not only to learn his feelings as a composer, but also — since he wrote it to perform himself — to gain insight into Joachim as a violinist. And, of course, there was no violinist whose playing Brahms knew more intimately than Joachim. They jammed together all the time."

Joachim dedicated his *Hungarian* Concerto to Brahms, who conducted its premiere in Hanover in 1860. Brahms, in turn, dedicated his only violin concerto to Joachim, who advised Brahms on its composition and played the world premiere in Leipzig in 1879. Both works were inspired by Hungarian folk music. Barton extensively researched both concertos, consulting numerous

dissertations, first editions, and the autograph score of the Brahms. Her quest was also influenced by one of her teachers, Werner Scholz, who had studied with a student of Joachim. She calls Joachim's rarely performed *Hungarian Concerto* "perhaps the most technically difficult work in the repertoire."

"Practicing the 'Hungarian' Concerto is like training to run a marathon," Barton writes in the liner notes. "Renowned for his large hands and remarkable stamina, Joachim probably gave little thought to the difficulties presented by the massive chords that stretch and contort the left hand and challenge the bow arm to produce a full and sustained tone."

On the new recording, Barton plays the Brahms Concerto with Joachim's cadenza in the first movement. A bonus track offers her own cadenza, which she usually performs in concert. Barton explains, "I wanted to strike a balance between the historically accurate and the personal. For this recording, I felt I had to include Joachim's cadenza, which fits so organically into the concerto because of his intense collaboration with Brahms. There is even some evidence that Brahms had a hand in shaping Joachim's cadenza. At the same time, my cadenza is the one most organic to my own interpretation, so I definitely wanted to include it on the CD."

For this recording, Rachel Barton plays a legendary violin with an intimate connection to both works: the 1742 Joseph Guarneri "del Gesu" violin known as the "ex-Soldat," in honor of violinist Marie Soldat (1864-1955). A lifelong friend to both composers, Soldat was a member of Brahms's inner circle who frequently performed his Concerto. Shortly before his death in 1897, Brahms selected the "ex-Soldat" for her to play and arranged its purchase for her use.

Brahms and Joachim met as young men in 1853. At 21, the Hungarian-born Joachim was already a celebrated composer and virtuoso. Brahms, some two years younger, was virtually unknown. Their deep personal friendship mirrored a mutually admiring musical partnership that lasted throughout their lives. The self-effacing Brahms considered Joachim the better composer. Interestingly, Joachim's *Hungarian Concerto* was immediately acclaimed as a masterpiece, while Brahms's concerto — now a pillar of the repertoire — received a muted reception at its premiere. "I hope that awareness of the Joachim Concerto's influence will shed new light on the Brahms Concerto and that Joachim's masterpiece will one day reclaim the great appreciation it once enjoyed," writes Barton in the liner notes to the recording.

At the age of 28, Rachel Barton is already in the third decade of a remarkable career that has taken her to the world's most prestigious concert, chamber, and recital stages. A Chicago native and former prodigy with an active performing career since the age of seven, Barton has blossomed into a deeply committed artist with an uncommonly wide repertoire and range of musical interests. She has appeared as soloist with some of the world's most prestigious ensembles, including the Chicago, Atlanta, St. Louis, Dallas, Louisville, Baltimore, Montreal, Vienna, New Zealand, and Budapest Symphony Orchestras, working closely with such renowned conductors as Zubin Mehta, Erich Leinsdorf, Neeme Järvi, and Semyon Bychkov. A top prizewinner in every major international competition she entered, Barton was the youngest person — and first American — to win the gold medal at the 1992 Quadrennial J.S. Bach International Violin Competition in Leipzig. She also won the prize for interpretation of the Paganini *Caprices* at both the 1992 Szigeti International Violin Competition In Budapest and the 1993 Paganini International Violin Competition in Genoa. Other top awards included the Queen Elisabeth (Brussels, 1993), Kreisler (Vienna, 1992), and Montreal (1991) International Violin Competitions.

Throughout her career, Rachel Barton has worked to reach and develop a wide and diverse audience for classical music, captivating fans who wouldn't necessarily have a prior knowledge of concert music through her performances at sports arenas and other mainstream events. She was one of the torchbearers in the 1996 Olympic torch relay and appeared later that summer in the opening ceremonies of the Paralympic Games at Centennial Olympic Stadium. She has performed her virtuoso arrangement of the National Anthem at Chicago Bulls playoff games and at the 1996 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. A fan of heavy-metal rock music, she frequently gives interviews on rock format radio stations, and has been featured in rock music magazines.

Barton enjoys giving special programs and demonstrations for children and often incorporates spoken program notes or pre-concert conversations into her appearances to help bring classical music to life for a wide-ranging audience.

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