

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: February 2004

VIOLINIST JENNIFER KOH EXPLORES FAR-FLUNG FANTASIES

New CD Offers Works by Schubert, Schumann, Schoenberg, and (Ornette) Coleman

Mirroring the repertoire she performs at her adventurous and increasingly high-profile recital appearances, violinist Jennifer Koh takes listeners on a flight of fantasies by four composers of distinctly different styles on a new Cedille Records recording.

On *Violin Fantasies*, Ms. Koh, with pianist Reiko Uchida, plays Franz Schubert's *Fantasia in C Major, D. 934*; Robert Schumann's *Fantasia in C Major, Op. 131*; Arnold Schoenberg's *Phantasy for Violin with Piano Accompaniment, Op. 47*; and jazz legend Ornette Coleman's "Trinity" — *Fantasy for Solo Violin* (Cedille CDR 90000 073).

In the CD notes, Andrea Lamoreaux writes that the term "fantasia" originated some 500 years ago to describe a work that "celebrated the power and ingenuity of a composer's imagination." In the 17th century, British composer Christopher Simpson described the fantasia as a form in which the composer can proceed wherever "his own fancy shall lead him to: but still concluding with something which hath art and excellency in it."

Schubert's (1797–1828) unrivaled gift for melody is on full display in the deliciously tuneful *Fantasia in C Major* (1827). It's a fantasy characterized more by overflowing lyricism and virtuosic writing (for both instruments) than structural experimentation. "Melodies pour forth from both players as they interweave their lines and comment on each other's progressions as equal partners,"

Lamoreaux writes.

Schumann (1810–1856) wrote his *Fantasia in C Major*, Op. 131 (1853), at the behest of violinist-composer Joseph Joachim, who urged Schumann to “follow Beethoven’s example and provide us poor violinists . . . with an opus out of the deep shaft of your creative genius.” This attractive work is sunny even in its pensive, magisterial moments. Schumann himself called it “a rather cheerful piece.” The emphasis, though, is on virtuosity rather than lyricism, and Schumann “sought and achieved a stunning display of string brilliance,” Lamoreaux writes.

The other-worldly *Phantasy for Violin with Piano Accompaniment*, Op. 47 (1949), was Schoenberg’s (1874–1951) last instrumental work. A serial composition, it has no “tunes” to speak of, but its virtuosity and emotional exuberance place it firmly in the fantasia tradition. Among its pleasures are its rhythmic propulsion, dramatic climaxes, and dynamic and chromatic contrasts. Composed according to the dictates of Schoenberg’s twelve-tone system, the music is expressive and wide-ranging in character.

Coleman (b. 1930), the iconic and iconoclastic jazz saxophonist and composer, is less familiar as a violinist and composer in the classical vein. Unveiled at Carnegie Hall in 1987, “Trinity” — *Fantasy for Solo Violin* (1986) is named for the river that runs through Coleman’s home town of Fort Worth, Texas. A collection of improvisational miniatures, “Trinity” is “full of energy, restless exploration and a sense of adventure. The music extends the technique of the violin in surprising ways,” wrote Eric Bromberger in notes for Ms. Koh’s January 2003 concert in San Francisco. In the way it presents original melodies and fully exploits their possibilities, “Trinity” is “the essence of what a fantasia was and is and should be,” Lamoreaux writes.

The stylistic diversity of the *Violin Fantasies* CD is in harmony with Ms. Koh’s far-reaching musical interests and talent. A recital review in the *New York Times* (Jan. 20, 2004) described her as an artist “who has distinguished herself as an adventurous musician with a flair for programming contemporary music” and yet delivered “fiery and impassioned” playing of more traditional fare.

Ms. Koh's previous Cedille CD was a program of solo chaconnes by Bach, Barth, and Reger (Cedille CDR 90000 060). ClassicsToday.com praised this 2001 release for its "imaginative and illuminating programming" and awarded the disc its highest rating for artistry and sound quality.

By design, Cedille CDs always have a Chicago connection: Ms. Koh, who studied with Jaime Laredo at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute and now lives in New York, hails from the Chicago area. She 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.

The Strad (Jan. 2000) called her "a risk-taking, high-octane player of the kind who grabs the listener by the ears and refuses to let go. . . . A scorching talent that should on no account be missed."

Pianist Reiko Uchida has soloed with orchestras including the Los Angeles Philharmonic and collaborated with chamber groups such as the Borromeo and Tokyo String quartets. She is a member of the Moebius Ensemble, in residence at Columbia University, and the Laurel Trio.

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

Cedille CDs are distributed by Qualiton Imports and are available at finer record stores nationally and through online retailers. 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.

####

VIOLIN FANTASIES

Franz Schubert: Fantasie in C Major, D. 934 (24:27)

Robert Schumann: Fantasie in C Major, Op. 131 (15:34)

Arnold Schoenberg: Phantasy, Op. 47 (8:53)

Ornette Coleman: "Trinity" —Fantasy for Solo Violin (6:17)

Jennifer Koh, violin

Reiko Uchida, piano

Cedille Records CDR 90000 073