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News

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VIOLINIST JENNIFER KOH SHOWCASES SCHUMANN SONATAS ON NEW CD

“One of my most personal projects to date”

Poignant Pieces for Violin and Piano Are Among the Composer’s Less-Known Works

Violinist Jennifer Koh and pianist Reiko Uchida perform all three of Robert Schumann’s violin sonatas on a new CD from Cedille Records.

Schumann: The Sonatas for Violin and Piano includes the Sonata No. 1 in A Minor, Op.105; Sonata No. 2 in D Minor, Op. 121; and Sonata No. 3 in A Minor, WoO 27 (Cedille Records CDR 90000 095).

These beautifully melodic and passionately expressive Romantic works from the early 1850s remain unfamiliar to many listeners.

In her preface to the CD booklet notes, Koh writes, “Playing and recording the Schumann Sonatas is one of my most personal projects to date.” She says she has always found Schumann’s music compelling for its haunting, obsessive, tender, and vulnerable qualities. “A single phrase is like a poignant memory” whose emotional power intensifies with each encounter, she says.

Though each sonata has its own personality, they share common characteristics. One is the prominence of the piano. “These are all true duo-sonatas, emphasizing each instrument in turn,” writes Andrea Lamoreaux of WFMT-FM in the program notes.

The First Sonata (1851) opens with a rhapsodic, lyrical movement. A serene Allegretto follows. In the finale, Schumann dramatically recalls the main theme of the first movement to connect all the thematic threads.

Schumann called his four-movement Sonata in D Minor (1851) his Grand Sonata. Its expressiveness and length justify the description. The first movement presents vigorously contrasted themes. In later movements, Schumann presents a snippet of a traditional chorale and then makes it the basis for a remarkable set of variations. The finale yields some particularly interesting piano writing.

Koh and Uchida have been performing this sonata to great acclaim in recital programs during the 2006–2007 concert season. It concluded their concerts in Philadelphia; Oberlin, Ohio; San Francisco; San Juan, P.R.; New York; and Columbus, Ohio. The *San Francisco Chronicle* called their traversal of the sonata “a performance of eloquence and power.”

The Third Sonata (1853) began life as a composition by committee — a collaborative effort by Schumann, Johannes Brahms, and Schumann student Albert Dietrich. Schumann wrote two movements, his colleagues each wrote one. The sonata was a gift to their friend, violin virtuoso Joseph Joachim. Schumann later rewrote the piece, substituting two new movements of his own for those by the other composers. Still little-known today, this work wasn’t published until 1956. Some believe Clara Schumann suppressed it because it recalled a tragic period of their life.

This sonata resembles the D-minor work in its expansiveness, emotional range, and four-movement structure. The conclusion to the sonata’s final movement is especially dramatic and rhapsodic, “a sheer celebration of sound,” Lamoreaux writes in the program notes.

This is Jennifer Koh’s fourth recording for Cedille Records and her second with Reiko Uchida. Their first Cedille recording was *Violin Fantasies* (CDR 90000 073), which included Schumann’s *Fantasia in C Major for Violin and Piano, Op. 131*. *Time Out New York* noted how, in the Schumann fantasy, “Koh makes a daunting solo cadenza sound effortless.” Audiophile Audition said Koh and Uchida “are dazzling as they segue from seamless dialog into piano

accompaniment for the brilliant solo violin. This is passionate music, wonderfully executed.” ClassicsToday.com said, “Koh and Uchida find a lightness and lyricism in the [Schumann] that allows us to enjoy the beautiful tunes” and called it “essential listening” for Schumann fans.

Koh made her New York Philharmonic debut last summer playing the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, which she has performed this season with the New Jersey Symphony and will perform March 16 with the Honolulu Symphony. She was a soloist this season with the Oregon Symphony under Carlos Kalmar and the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Esa-Pekka Salonen.

She is to be featured on the April 2007 cover of *Strings* magazine and appeared on the cover of the September 2006 edition of *Current Biography* magazine, an authoritative reference series. More artist information is available online at www.jenniferkoh.com.

Reiko Uchida has been a recital partner for Jennifer Koh, David Shifrin, Jaime Laredo, and Sharon Robinson. She has collaborated with the Borromeo and Tokyo String Quartets and is a member of the Moebius Ensemble and Laurel Trio (members.aol.com/laureltrio/pianist.htm).

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 now distributed by Allegro Corporation in the U.S. and Canada.

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Schumann: The Sonatas for Violin and Piano

Sonata No. 1 in A Minor, Op. 105 (1851) (17:23)

Sonata No. 2 in D Minor, Op. 121 (1851) (27:31)

Sonata No. 3 in A Minor, WoO 27 (1853) (21:26)

Jennifer Koh, violin

Reiko Uchida, piano

(Cedille Records CDR 90000 095)