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JENNIFER KOH

Violinist

Violinist **Jennifer Koh** has earned a world-wide reputation for being unique in her generation for bringing her probing intellectual acuity to contemporary and traditional repertoire in equal measure, and is beloved by audiences and critics alike for her consummate musicianship and the daring passion of her performances. Ms. Koh is committed to exploring connections between the pieces she plays, searching for similarities of voice among composers, as well as within the works of a single composer. Accordingly, her programs often present rare and revealing juxtapositions, offering works by composers as divergent as Mozart and Ligeti, Schubert and Saariaho.

Ms. Koh's engagements for the 2010-2011 season begin with a debut with the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra in a special program featuring John Adams' Violin Concerto and Beethoven's Violin Concerto, conducted by Joana Carneiro. Internationally, she debuts with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in the UK, performing Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 5 with conductor Paul Watkins, and performs with the Residentie Orkest in Amsterdam with conductor Ludovic Morlot. Her other debuts this season include the Orquestra Sinfonica do Estado de Sao Paulo in Brazil, the Colorado Symphony Orchestra, San Juan Symphony, and the Buffalo Philharmonic. Ms. Koh returns to the National Symphony this season, performing the American premiere of Augusta Read Thomas's *Juggler in Paradise* in June of 2011 under conductor Christoph Eschenbach. Her other symphonic return engagements this season include repertoire ranging from Mozart to Unsuk Chin with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in London; the Singapore Symphony; the Princeton Symphony in Princeton, NJ; and the Oregon Symphony Orchestra in Portland, OR. Ms. Koh will continue her "Bach and Beyond" recital project in the 2010-11 season, presenting recitals at the 92nd Street Y in New York City, UNC Chapel Hill, NC; Humboldt State University, CA; and UC Santa Barbara, CA. Ms. Koh will also perform recitals in Troy, NY (with pianist Shai Wosner) and a special tour with cellist Anssi Karttunen and composer/pianist Magnus Lindberg in New York at the Baryshnikov Arts Center in New York and in San Francisco under the auspices of San Francisco Performances. In March of 2011, Ms. Koh premieres composer Mark Grey's *Mugunghwa* with the LA Masterworks Chorale; she will also perform with the Los Angeles Philharmonic conducted by John Adams in May of 2011, premiering a new work commissioned for Ms. Koh by Missy Mazzoli in a concert that also features her with composer/guitarist Steve Mackey in his own piece, *Four Iconoclast Interludes*. In the fall of 2010, Ms. Koh joins conductor Pavel Kogan and the Moscow State Symphony on a North American tour, which includes performances of Bruch and Mendelssohn in California, Nevada, South Dakota, Pennsylvania, and Florida.

Highlights of Ms. Koh's 2009-2010 season included her PROMS debut with the BBC Symphony, directed by Jiří Bělohlávek in the UK premiere of Augusta Read Thomas's violin concerto, *Juggler in Paradise*, and her Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi debut with conductor Xian Zhang. Her season also included return guest appearances with the National

Symphony of Washington, D.C. (Szymanowski Concerto No. 1, with Juraj Valcuha), and the New World Symphony (Adams Concerto, with Ludovic Morlot), among other ensembles. Her return appearance with the New Jersey Symphony, featuring Ms. Koh in the Brahms Concerto under the direction of Jacques Lacombe, was praised by Steve Smith of the *New York Times*: “Jennifer Koh, a superb violinist whose New York engagements chiefly involve challenging contemporary fare, played with consummate skill and passion in Brahms’s Violin Concerto. Perhaps Ms. Koh’s diverse activities ward off dull routine: her account had a compelling mix of intelligence and freshness, with a spectacular showing in the first-movement cadenza” (April 22, 2010).

To commemorate the 325th anniversary of J.S. Bach’s birth, Ms. Koh performed six noontime recitals in a series devoted to the complete Bach violin partitas presented by Columbia University’s Miller Theater at Philosophy Hall. Senior critic Anthony Tommasini of the *New York Times* reviewed Ms. Koh’s performance of Bach’s great D Minor Chaconne: “Finally, she gave a deeply expressive account of the Chaconne, dispatching the challenges with such security that you did not notice the sheer virtuosity at work. The ovation was so ardent that Ms. Koh, who had been visibly engrossed in her performance, wiped away tears” (September 30, 2009). During the 09-10 season, Ms. Koh launched “Bach and Beyond,” a recital project that explores the solo violin repertoire from Bach’s six Sonatas and Partitas to newly commissioned works for solo violin. “Bach and Beyond” was presented in the 09-10 season by San Francisco Performances, Oberlin College, and Amherst College. Other recital engagements included Houston’s Da Camera Society, the Baryshnikov Arts Center in New York, Mozart and Schubert programs with pianist Shai Wosner, and a duo program with cellist Anssi Karttunen with performances in Ithaca, NY; Philadelphia, PA (Philadelphia Chamber Music Society); the Schubert Club of Minneapolis; and Washington, D.C. (Kennedy Center).

Ms. Koh’s most recent recording for the Cedille label, “Rhapsodic Musings,” was released in early 2010, and features solo violin works by 21st-century composers; she also included a visual component to the disc, a dynamic interpretation of Esa-Pekka Salonen’s *Lachen Verlernt* for solo violin by filmmaker Tal Rosner. This short film was presented by the 2010 Tribeca Film Festival in the Shorts: Experimental Collisions category. Reviewing Jennifer Koh’s “Rhapsodic Musings,” Art Lange of *Fanfare* writes: “When [contemporary music] is played with the passion and conviction that violinist Jennifer Koh generates on behalf of these three 21st-century scores (not excluding Elliott Carter’s *Four Lauds*, which were composed between 1984 and 2000), the skeptics have nothing to fear. She displays impeccable technique and a flawless tonal range regardless of their degree of difficulty, and more important, uncovers the lyrical impulse at the music’s core” (January/February 2010).

In November 2008, Ms. Koh made her debut with the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra performing the Russian premiere of Ligeti’s Violin Concerto under Maestro Valery Gergiev in St. Petersburg. Other engagements that season included solo appearances with the orchestras of Atlanta, Philadelphia, Minnesota, Houston, and the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington DC. She was heard in recital in Vancouver, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia; and in chamber music in New York at the 92nd Street Y.

Since the 1994-95 season, when she won the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, the Concert Artists Guild Competition, and the Avery Fisher Career Grant, Ms. Koh has been heard with leading orchestras and conductors around the world, including the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony, the Chicago Symphony, the Cincinnati Symphony, the National Symphony Orchestra, New Jersey Symphony, the Detroit Symphony, Houston Symphony, the New World Symphony, and Montreal Symphony. Abroad, she has appeared with the Czech Philharmonic, the BBC London Symphony, the BBC Scottish Symphony, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Iceland Symphony, the Helsinki Philharmonic, the Lahti Symphony, Moscow Radio Symphony, the Brandenburg Ensemble, and the Singapore Symphony. A prolific recitalist, Ms. Koh appears frequently at major music centers and festivals including Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, The Kimmel Center in Philadelphia, Marlboro, Wolf Trap, Spoleto, and The Festival International de Lanaudiere in Canada.

Ms. Koh records regularly for the Chicago-based Cedille label, and, in addition to “Rhapsodic Musings,” she recently released the Grammy-nominated recording “String Poetic.” Other Cedille recordings include an acclaimed CD devoted to the complete Schumann violin sonatas plus earlier discs of music by such varied composers as Bach, Schubert, Szymanowski, Martinů, Schoenberg, and jazz great Ornette Coleman, as well as “Portraits,” a disc featuring the Szymanowski, and Martinů violin concertos recorded with the Grant Park Orchestra under conductor Carlos Kalmar. Her recording “Violin Fantasies,” for the Cedille label, has been praised for its sense of adventure and brilliant musicianship. In the words of John von Rhein of the *Chicago Tribune*, “The idea of a concept album built around violin fantasies from various periods by composers with distinctly different voices is so good I’m surprised other fiddlers haven’t ventured it. Jennifer Koh, the young violinist on this new Cedille recording, regards each of the four fantasies (Schubert, Schumann, Schoenberg, Ornette Coleman) as a ‘life’s journey,’ and something of that spirit of high adventure informs her collaboration with pianist Reiko Uchida.” Ms. Koh’s first Cedille recording was an imaginative program centered on Bach’s great Chaconne (with solo chaconnes by turn of the century contemporaries Richard Barth, and Max Reger).

A committed educator, Ms. Koh has also won high praise for her performances in classrooms around the country under her innovative Music Messenger outreach program. Now in its seventh year, the program continues to form an important part of her musical activities. “The majority of children in this country have not been given an opportunity to learn music as a form of self-expression,” she asserts, “and I want to share the experience of creating and listening to music with them.” Ms. Koh’s outreach efforts have taken her to classrooms all over the country to perform challenging music – whether it be Bach, Paganini, or Bartók – for thousands of students who have little opportunity to hear classical music in their daily lives. “Music is a visceral experience which can create a positive outlet for emotions and a place for inner expression that is more compelling than time spent in front of the television or at a mall,” she adds. She is also a member of the Board of Directors of the National Foundation for the Advancement for the Arts, a scholarship program for high school students in the arts.

Born in Chicago of Korean parents, Ms. Koh currently resides in New York City. Ms. Koh is a graduate of Oberlin College and an alumna of the Curtis Institute, where she worked extensively with Jaime Laredo and Felix Galimir. Ms. Koh is grateful to her private sponsor for the generous loan of the 1727 Ex Grumiaux Ex General DuPont Stradivari she uses in performance.

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