



CEDILLE

The Sonatas for Violin and Piano

# SCHUMANN

**Jennifer Koh**

violin

**Reiko Uchida**

piano

## SCHUMANN THE SONATAS FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO

Jennifer Koh, violin

Reiko Uchida, piano

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

- 1 I. Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck (7:55)
- 2 II. Allegretto (4:17)
- 3 III. Lebhaft (5:05)

### Sonata No. 2 in D minor, Op. 121 (1851) (27:30)

- 4 I. Ziemlich langsam — Lebhaft (10:25)
- 5 II. Sehr lebhaft (4:21)
- 6 III. Leise, einfach (5:46)
- 7 IV. Bewegt (6:50)

### Sonata No. 3 in A minor, WoO 27 (1853) (21:25)

- 8 I. Ziemlich langsam — (Lebhaft) (7:42)
- 9 II. Scherzo: Lebhaft (4:08)
- 10 III. Intermezzo: Bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell (3:03)
- 11 IV. Finale: Markirtes, ziemlich lebhaftes Tempo (6:23)

TT: (66:35)

**Producer & Engineer** Judith Sherman

**Assistant Engineer** Jeanne Velonis

**Graphic Design** Melanie Germond

**Artist Photos** Janette Beckman

**Recorded** Sonatas Nos. 1 and 2 recorded May 27–29, 2005 in Theater A, Performing Arts Center, SUNY, Purchase, NY.  
Sonata No. 3 recorded June 1 & 2, 2006, in the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York City

**Microphones** Schoeps MK2, Sonodore

**Steinway Piano**



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*This recording is dedicated to the memory of Edward Aldwell. His warmth, generosity and wit are missed by all who knew him. His integrity and intelligence as a musician will always inspire us.*

*Playing and recording the Schumann Sonatas is one of my most personal projects to date. Schumann's music has always compelled me as a musician and a listener for as long as I can remember. Schumann's music is the most human with its viscerally haunting, obsessive, tender, and vulnerable extremes. One can connect a lifetime of experiences — birth, love, hate, death — into every phrase of his music. These disparate experiences are tied together into one life — one phrase — one movement — one sonata — in Schumann's music. A single phrase is like a poignant memory that returns and with each visit is reborn more vividly, more passionately, more tenderly than before.*

— Jennifer Koh

#### **PROGRAM NOTES** by Andrea Lamoreaux

Devotees of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Classical-Romanticism, on both sides of the music stand, have usually experienced uncomplicated enjoyment of Robert Schumann's music, so beautifully melodic and passionately expressive. Academic commentators, on the other hand, have been known to tie themselves up in knots about it, by turning musical analysis into after-the-fact psychoanalysis, thus adding complication instead of casting light. Knowing that Schumann showed symptoms of mental instability from as early as 1828, when he was in his late teens; that his struggles with depression were likely one reason Clara Wieck's father didn't want her to marry him; and that he

died at age 46 confined to an insane asylum after a suicide attempt — some historians have sought to evaluate his works in terms of mental aberration. An awkward orchestral passage or meandering piano piece can thus be fitted into an overall theory that posits a composer beset by psychological obstacles and unevenness of focus.

While there can be no doubt that a composer's personality influences his or her style, the sometimes-obsessive concentration on Schumann's mental state at various stages of his sadly short life has tended, at times, to obscure some plain facts: his music is challenging and involving to play, reward-

ing and enjoyable to hear. And, oddly, some of it remains relatively unknown. Despite explorations in concert and on recordings of lesser-known works such as the ambitious *Scenes from Goethe's Faust*, we usually think of Schumann in terms of the magical, youthful piano suites like *Carnaval*, the lyrical song outpourings of 1840 (the year of his marriage to Clara), the four symphonies, the Cello Concerto, and the beloved Piano Concerto. In addition to these standards, most of his chamber music has remained in the repertoire: his string quartets, Piano Quintet, and duo works such as the Three Romances (oboe and piano), Adagio and Allegro (horn and piano), and fairy-tale works involving viola. But his sonatas for violin and piano? They're out there, they get played, but they're also new discoveries for many of us.

All three violin sonatas date from Schumann's rather unhappy time as general music director for the city of Düsseldorf, a tenure that began in 1850. Never an outstanding conductor, he was in constant conflict with the city's orchestra and its administrators. But this time in his life was extremely productive for composition. He wrote his Symphony No. 3, the "Rhenish," revised an earlier symphony that became No. 4 in D Minor, initiated a number of choral projects, and

returned to the realm of chamber music for the first time in several years. The opus-numbered Violin Sonatas — Op. 105 in A Minor and Op. 121 in D Minor — both date from 1851. They were first performed in private settings, later in public, with Clara at the piano in partnership with good friends who were also exceptional violinists: Joseph Wasielewski from Mendelssohn's Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, who would be Schumann's first biographer; Ferdinand David, the Gewandhaus concertmaster, to whom were dedicated both Mendelssohn's E Minor Violin Concerto and the second Schumann sonata; and Joseph Joachim, the young virtuoso who would become a colleague and friend of Brahms, and who would also partner with Clara in many recitals as she continued her concert career after Schumann's death. Joachim was also, in a sense, the inspiration for Schumann's third violin sonata, two movements of which originated in a collaborative work he wrote with Johannes Brahms and another colleague to honor their violinist friend.

The three sonatas, while all quite different, have characteristics in common. One that stands out immediately is the prominence of the piano. These are all true duo-sonatas, emphasizing each instrument in turn. The

keyboard player may sometimes introduce a theme or its variant, take over a passage from the violinist, or offer elaborations in striking contrast to the violin's progressions. Another element that emerges is the almost-constant shifting between major and minor modes. Each sonata is cast in a minor home key — A Minor, D Minor, A Minor — and following the traditions of sonata form in his first movements and elsewhere, Schumann generally casts the second, contrasting section in the major mode. But the motives refuse to stay in their traditional places. Throughout each sonata, the fluctuation between major and minor modes contributes to a feeling of steadily-evolving thematic exploration. This links to another element the works share: the recalling of themes and motives from earlier movements to unify each sonata in subtle yet strong connections. And each has a headlong, rhapsodic nature only briefly interrupted by passages of serenity, tending to make those calmer sections, such as the variations in the Second Sonata, stand out even more.

The first movement of the First Sonata is more than adequately characterized by its tempo indication, which translates as "With Passionate Expression." Rhapsodic and lyrical, its pace is largely determined by the prevailing rhythmic unit: rapid 16<sup>th</sup> notes. It is virtu-

ally monothematic: the agitated and expressive A minor tune introduced in the violin's lower register persists almost throughout. The modulation of this theme to the relative C Major is standard procedure, but the persistent major-minor fluctuation makes the delineation of sections unclear and gives us an impression of constant variation. Also standard procedure is the progression from A Minor to A Major in the recapitulation; but whereas Mozart, for example, might have ended the movement in A Major, Schumann reinforces the passionate nature of the entire movement by a sudden and emphatic return to the minor.

The Allegretto movement, much more serene in character, is in the nature of an Intermezzo or a gentle Scherzo. The key fluctuates among F Major, C Major, and F Minor. Once again, there is basically one theme, elaborated and expanded through violin ruminations. The piano seems more of an accompaniment here, but it is the keyboard that first states the assertive main theme of the A Minor finale. The violin quickly takes it up, and runs with it; as with the first movement, the predominant rhythmic unit is the 16<sup>th</sup> note. A short and concentrated finale, this "Lebhaft" (Lively) movement is structured as a Rondo, with a major-mode

additional theme set against the recurrences of the opening melody. Toward the end, Schumann dramatically recalls the main theme of the first movement, tying all his thematic threads together.

In its juxtaposition of the keys of A Minor/A Major and F Major/F Minor, the First sonata harks back to Schumann's three string quartets of the early 1840s, and to the Piano Concerto of the same decade. The key of D Minor, meanwhile, had special personal resonance for Schumann, as it did for Mozart, implying unusual depth of emotion. The second violin sonata, in D Minor, is much more expansive than the concentrated First Sonata. Schumann dubbed it Grand Sonata, and in both length and expressiveness, it fully qualifies for the name. The first movement opens with a flourish of chords and octaves, after which the violin plays a slow (Langsam) introductory melody that recalls operatic recitative. The main section of the movement, marked Lebhaft or Lively, presents two vigorously-contrasted themes that are each extensively developed and recombined. Once again the mode shifts continually between minor and major, and related keys are tantalizingly explored. The piano often takes the lead in this movement. The violin has a characteristic motto, an upward

run, but basically stays in its middle register. D Major appears to be the intended key of the final part of the recapitulation, but as with the First Sonata, Schumann asserts the minor at the movement's close.

This sonata has both a Scherzo and a slow movement, unlike the First Sonata (where those functions were more or less combined in the Intermezzo). Moving rapidly in 6/8 time, the Scherzo contrasts two themes that culminate in a quotation from the traditional chorale "Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ" (All praise to you, Jesus Christ).

The chorale melody — a gorgeous tune — then becomes the basis for a remarkable set of variations in the slow third movement. The piano introduces the theme with the violin playing pizzicato over it. Then the violin takes up the theme with the bow, playing it first as a single line, then in double-stops. G Major shifts to minor as the variations unfold, and the insistent triplet patterns from the Scherzo are brought back to link these two central movements both rhythmically and thematically.

The final movement is marked "Bewegt": moving. Move it does, almost in perpetual motion, with an emphatic opening theme

repeated and insisted upon by both instruments at the very beginning, then reiterated after contrasting motives in a quasi-Rondo structure. The concluding key is a triumphant D Major. The piano figurations are especially interesting in this movement: running and rippling for measure after measure, they are often suddenly punctuated by bravura octave passages.

Brahms made his early reputation as a pianist. In 1853, he undertook a concert tour with the Hungarian-born violinist Eduard Remenyi, who was much more famous than his partner at the time. Along the way, Remenyi introduced the young keyboard whiz to several important colleagues, the first being his fellow-countryman Franz Liszt, with whom Brahms found little in common either personally or musically. The introduction to Joseph Joachim, though, was a most significant event in both their lives. Already on the path that would lead him to acclaim as one of the greatest violinists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Joachim became a close friend of Brahms — an advisor, collaborator, and mentor. Despite a few fallings-out, they remained friends for the rest of their lives. It was Joachim who suggested that Brahms visit Robert and Clara Schumann in Düsseldorf, an encounter that happened in

September 1853. It was to Schumann that Brahms first revealed himself as a composer, and the older man was enthusiastic. The visit lasted several weeks, and one result was an article in the *Neue Zeitschrift fuer Musik* (New Music Journal) that Schumann edited, touting the pianist from Hamburg as a major creative voice of the future. Another result was the relationship that developed between Brahms and Clara Schumann, who became the other important mentor and collaborator in his life, and may perhaps have been the only woman besides his mother whom he ever loved. Brahms was a supportive friend of the Schumann family during the time of Robert's suicide attempt, hospitalization, and death.

Those sad events were still in the future in October 1853, when Joachim was expected to give a concert in Düsseldorf. It was Schumann who suggested they give him a present: a collaborative sonata with movements to be contributed by Brahms, Schumann himself, and one of his students, Albert Dietrich. Otherwise unremembered as a composer, Dietrich went on to become a prominent conductor in Bonn and other German cities who consistently championed Brahms's orchestral music. The collaborative sonata was nicknamed F-A-E, using the first

letters of a motto Joachim had adopted for himself, "Frei aber einsam" (Free but lonely). Dietrich contributed the first movement, a rather conventional Allegro; Brahms offered a brilliantly energetic Scherzo, which is often played as a separate piece; and Schumann composed an Intermezzo and a Finale. The letters F-A-E are also musical notes, and they are combined to form motives of the work.

After the gift was presented and played, Schumann decided to add two movements of his own to the Intermezzo and Finale to construct a third, all-Schumann, violin sonata. It has been suggested that Clara suppressed this little-known work because it brought back painful memories of her husband's final years. In any event, it was not published until 1956 and is still seldom played.

In some respects this sonata (A Minor once again) resembles the D Minor work in its expansiveness, emotional range, and layout in four movements, the first with a slow introduction. This opening, dramatic and emphatic, is characterized by flourishing runs for the piano and energetic leaps in the violin part, a technique little used in the other two sonatas. The wandering through keys, and back and forth between major and

minor, remains characteristic. A triumphant climax is reached via piano octaves and violin double-stops. The Scherzo opens with the violin playing a theme that's related to the main theme of the first movement. The string player definitely leads in this movement, especially in the brief, songlike mid-section. The Intermezzo is even more songlike. It's not really a slow movement — the tempo marking is "Moving" — but its mood is one of serenity and gentle melancholy. The piano briefly picks up the main melody as the violin meditates gently above it. The finale begins as a march and presents its themes with strong rhythmic emphasis throughout. Contrasting with this overall texture is an almost cadenza-like passage for the violin, playing elaborate runs over a piano statement of the main theme. The movement's coda, highly dramatic and rhapsodic, is a sheer celebration of sound.

*Andrea Lamoreaux is music director of 98.7 WFMT-FM, Chicago's classical-music station.*

## JENNIFER KOH

Violinist Jennifer Koh is recognized in the U.S. and abroad for her ability to fuse intensity of temperament with classical poise and elegance. *The New York Times* calls her a “fearless soloist,” who has a formidable capacity for “living through” the music she performs on stage. Equally at home in classic and contemporary repertoire, Ms. Koh revels in the unexpected.

The 2006–07 season finds Ms. Koh in increasingly high demand as a soloist with important American orchestras and in recital at the country’s most prestigious venues. In July 2006, she made her debut with the New York Philharmonic performing the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto in their Concerts in the Parks series in New York, and in Vail, Colorado during the orchestra’s residency at the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival. During the remainder of the season she will solo with the Oregon Symphony, Marin (CA) Symphony, New Jersey Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Whatcom (WA) Symphony, Honolulu Symphony, Orchestra 2001, Greenwich Symphony, Tallahassee Symphony, and Annapolis Symphony. Her recital engagements include performances in Philadelphia at the Kimmel Center, in San Francisco at the Herbst Theater, in San Juan (PR), at Oberlin College, and in New York at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y.

Continuing her commitment to new music, this season Ms. Koh premieres two works commissioned especially for her. *String Poetic* for violin and piano by Jennifer Higdon, commissioned for Ms. Koh by the 92<sup>nd</sup> St Y,

Kimmel Center in Philadelphia, San Francisco Performances, Johnstown Community College, and Oberlin College received its world premiere performance in October 2006 and *Spin 5*, a violin concerto by Charles Wuorinen, commissioned for Ms. Koh by the Miller Theater will be premiered in April 2007.

Ms. Koh came to international attention in 1994 when she took the top prize and all special prizes awarded at the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. She also won the Concert Artists Guild Competition and has received an Avery Fisher Career Grant. Since these triumphs, she has been heard with the world’s leading orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic; the Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit, Cincinnati, Minnesota, Houston, Iceland, Moscow Radio, and Washington National Symphonies; the Cleveland Orchestra; and the Helsinki and Czech Philharmonics; among many others. Her festival appearances include Marlboro, Wolf Trap, Mostly Mozart, Santa Fe, Spoleto, Vail, Ravinia, and Schlewesig-Holstein in Germany (in recital with Christoph Eschenbach).

Born and raised in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, Ms. Koh studied with Almita and Roland Vamos at the Music Center of the North Shore in Winnetka, Illinois (now known as the Music Institute of Chicago). At 11 she had already appeared as a soloist with the Chicago Symphony, and at age 15 she won first place at the 1992 Illinois Young Performers Competition, sponsored by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Jennifer Koh completed her studies with Jaime Laredo and Felix Galimir at the Curtis Institute of Music in

2002. She received a Bachelor’s Degree in English Literature from Oberlin College and a Performance Diploma in Music from the Oberlin Conservatory. Ms. Koh enjoys outreach activities, working with students of all ages in masterclasses and lecture/demonstrations. Her uniquely personal education program, “Jennifer Koh’s Music Messenger,” introduces children to music and encourages music-making as a means of self-expression that can transcend boundaries of culture, language, race, and socio-economic background. Ms. Koh currently resides in New York City.

This is Jennifer Koh’s fourth CD for Cedille Records. She has also recorded Gian Carlo Menotti’s Violin Concerto for Chandos Records, Carl Nielsen’s Violin Concerto on the Kontrapunkt label, the Violin Concerto by Uuno Klami on BIS, and Andrei Eshpai’s Violin Concerto No. 4 for Albany. Ms. Koh wishes to thank her private patron for the generous loan of the 1727 Ex Grumiaux Ex General DuPont Stradivari which she uses in performance and for this recording.

For more information, please visit [www.JenniferKoh.com](http://www.JenniferKoh.com).

## REIKO UCHIDA

Pianist Reiko Uchida is recognized as one of the finest young musicians on the scene today. First prize winner of the Joanna Hodges Piano Competition, Ms. Uchida has appeared as soloist with numerous orchestras, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Orchestra of the Curtis

Institute, and the Santa Fe Symphony, among others. Ms. Uchida made her New York solo debut in 2001 at Carnegie’s Weill Hall under the auspices of the Abby Whiteside Foundation. She has performed solo and chamber music concerts throughout the world, including the United States, Japan, France, Italy, Germany, Russia, Finland, Bulgaria, and the Czech Republic, in venues including Avery Fisher Hall, Alice Tully Hall, the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Kennedy Center, the White House, and Suntory Hall in Tokyo. Her festival appearances include Spoleto, Tanglewood, Santa Fe, Marlboro, and the Laurel Festival of the Arts.

As a chamber musician, she was one of the first pianists selected for Chamber Music Society Two, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center’s program for outstanding emerging artists. She has been a recital partner for Jennifer Koh, David Shifrin, Jaime Laredo, and Sharon Robinson, with whom she performed the complete works of Beethoven for cello and piano. She has also collaborated with the Borromeo and Tokyo String Quartets. She is a member of the Laurel Trio, and the Moebius Ensemble, a group specializing in 20th century music in residence at Columbia University.

Ms. Uchida holds a Bachelor’s degree from Curtis Institute of Music, where she studied with Claude Frank and Leon Fleisher, and a Master’s degree from the Mannes College of Music. She currently resides in New York City where she is an associate faculty member at Columbia University.

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