

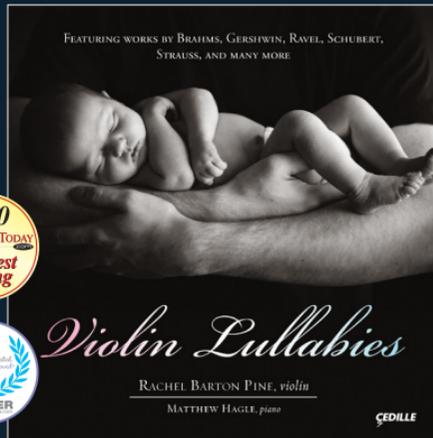
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Recorded Stadthalle Göttingen, August 28–30, 2012
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Bow Dominique Peccatte
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Rachel Barton Pine

Göttinger Symphonie
Orchester
Christoph-Mathias
Mueller

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847) Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64 (25:48)

- 1 I. Allegro molto appassionato (12:28)
- 2 II. Andante (7:05)
- 3 III. Allegretto non troppo — Allegro molto vivace (6:14)

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827) 4 Romance for Violin and Orchestra No. 1 in G major, Op. 40 (6:56)

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–1856) Violin Concerto in D minor, WoO 23 (29:36)

- 5 I. In kräftigem, nicht zu schnellem Tempo (14:17)
- 6 II. Langsam (6:16)
- 7 III. Lebhaft, doch nicht schnell (8:59)

BEETHOVEN 8 Romance No. 2 in F major, Op. 50 (8:33)

TT: (71:20)

Personal Note

I have had the pleasure of performing many works from the vast violin concerto repertoire, but for the majority of my career, I had not been drawn to play Schumann's Violin Concerto. My opinion changed in 2009, when Maestro Christoph-Mathias Mueller invited me to perform it with him and the Göttinger Symphonie Orchester the following year.

I have a tremendous respect for Maestro Mueller and generally share his musical tastes. I also knew that many people regard the Schumann Concerto highly, so I agreed to learn it.

Studying the piece closely and collaborating with Maestro Mueller was a revelation. Maestro Mueller's detailed and imaginative shaping of the orchestral accompaniment brought the music to life and transcended any flaws or weaknesses in the scoring. Against this backdrop, I was inspired to find new beauty in the solo violin part. The musical experience was so profound that I left the stage determined to record it with Maestro Mueller.

The work is not without its challenges—perhaps the most significant of which is the tempo of the last movement. The technical demands of the solo part necessitate a slower tempo that results in a stodgy feeling. Increasing the tempo to fit the music renders certain passages unplayable.

I don't fault Schumann. His mental state at the end of his life prevented the normal collaborative process with his dedicatee, Joseph Joachim. Joachim undoubtedly would have suggested revisions to make the music more violinistic. His respect for Schumann seems to have prevented him from making any modifications in the absence of the composer's approval.

I addressed these challenges by making a number of minor changes to various notes and bowings, always guided by the principle of WWJD—What Would

Joachim Do? Based on my intense study of Joachim's suggested revisions to the Brahms Violin Concerto, by Joachim's own concerto writing, and by my personal experiences collaborating with composers, I tried to find the solutions that Joachim might have suggested to Schumann had he had the opportunity.

In contrast to the Schumann, the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto has been a lifelong friend. I still remember the cassette tapes I listened to over and over with my Mom as she drove me to my earliest violin lessons, and the LP recordings we played at home. As is typical for young violinists, the Mendelssohn was one of the first major Romantic violin concertos I learned. I first began studying it around the age of eight and revisited it when I entered the studio of my main teachers, Almita and Roland Vamos. My first public performances with orchestra occurred when I was 10 and the Mendelssohn is among the works that I perform most frequently.

In one of my earliest performances, I played the third movement as part of a Wild West-themed family concert. The memory of that performance—standing on stage in cowboy boots, blue jean skirt, checkered shirt, braided hair, and a big belt buckle—is so indelible that to this day I always think “yee haw!” when the trumpets herald the beginning of the third movement.

The Mendelssohn does not demand the endurance, emotional intensity, or technical virtuosity of the Brahms, Sibelius, or Tchaikovsky. However, I have found that the older I get, the more difficult this “easier” concerto becomes. In perhaps the most frustrating violin lesson I ever had, Almita Vamos spent the entire hour working with me on just the first measure of the Mendelssohn. At the time, I thought it was only about shaping the opening phrase. I now realize that she was teaching me so much more about the piece and my future journey with it.

The Mendelssohn is neither a purely Classical-style concerto nor a full-fledged Romantic work. The perfect balance between warmth and tasteful purity is ever elusive. With each performance, I strive to come ever closer to the unachievable ideal in my mind. I have become increasingly convinced that the Mendelssohn benefits from tempi that are flowing rather than expansive, paired with judicious rubato and a lightness of touch. This is reflected in my performance on this recording.

The Beethoven Romances were not originally planned for this album. I'm very grateful to producer Steve Epstein for suggesting them when we found ourselves ahead of schedule during the sessions. Thanks to the miracle of modern technology, my parts were sent from Chicago in a matter of minutes. The spare orchestration and chamber-like integration with the solo part of these beautiful pieces made it a special pleasure to collaborate with Maestro Mueller on interpretive details.

Given the programming of my Brahms/Joachim and Beethoven/Clement concerto albums, many of you might have expected me to pair the Mendelssohn with a concerto by Mendelssohn's dedicatee, Ferdinand David. After careful study of David's concerti, I didn't feel that they were as intimately connected to Mendelssohn's masterpiece as was the case in my previous pairings. I felt that including a David concerto would have come across more as a novelty than a revelation.

I would like to extend special thanks to Ruth Ann Little for graciously providing me with her thesis, "Romance in G Major by Ludwig van Beethoven: A Study (1977)." I would also like to acknowledge the author of another major source for my program notes to this CD: "Robert Schumann's Violin concerto, WoO 23: a reappraisal of the work and its suppression (2000)" by Louis Stephen Hajosy, III.

Finally, special thanks goes to the many generous supporters of Cedille Records' crowdfunding campaign on Kickstarter, particularly:

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as well as to donors who supported this CD with a direct gift to Cedille Records, including:

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Thanks for your belief in me and this recording project!

This project was one of the most musically rewarding I've had the privilege to realize. I hope you discover something fresh, new, and wonderful in this extraordinary music.

Rachel Barton Pine, 2013

Mendelssohn and Schumann Violin Concertos, Beethoven Romances

Notes by Rachel Barton Pine

Madness and death, rejection and suppression, resurrection and redemption, Hitler, séances — the Schumann Violin Concerto is surrounded by drama and intrigue. Against this backdrop, the work's merit continues to be debated. Is it an inferior piece that would be played less frequently were it not by a famous composer? Conversely, would it be more highly regarded if it wasn't a work many consider (rightly or wrongly) to be not up to its great composer's highest standards? Should our knowledge of Schumann's mental health carry any weight in our judgment of his late compositions?

Robert Schumann (1810–1856) wrote his only Violin Concerto during a two-week burst of inspiration in autumn 1853, a happy period in which he met Brahms for the first time. Schumann dedicated the concerto to his

friend, the great violinist, conductor, composer, and pedagogue, Joseph Joachim. Structurally, the work is conservatively classical. Grandly symphonic in conception, the first movement is in sonata-allegro form with a double exposition featuring a powerful opening theme. The development transforms a minor-key version of the warmly romantic second theme into quiet stillness, with fragments from the solo violin set against achingly beautiful lines from the clarinet and oboe. There is no cadenza. The intimate and poignant second movement opens with a wistful solo melody in syncopated rhythm played by the principal cellist. This theme returns in the last movement, an energetic rondo in polonaise style that follows the second movement without pause.

In January 1854, Joachim played through the concerto for Schumann with the orchestra in Hanover where Joachim was concertmaster. His bow arm was admittedly fatigued from conducting. The following month,

Schumann attempted suicide, subsequently entering a sanatorium in which he died two years later. He never finished discussing revisions with Joachim.

Though never performed, the piece was periodically revisited after Schumann's death. His wife, Clara, continued to play the concerto occasionally with Joachim in its piano reduction version. Joachim also rehearsed it in 1857 with the orchestra in Leipzig whose concertmaster was Ferdinand David, Joachim's former teacher at Mendelssohn's conservatory.

However, despite Brahms's positive opinion of the concerto (relayed in an 1896 conversation with American music critic Arthur Abell, later quoted in the *New York Times*), Joachim was clearly unable to separate his opinion about the quality of Schumann's composition from his emotional distress over his friend's mental illness. So intense was Joachim's reaction against Schumann's last orchestral work that he placed the manuscript in

a library in Berlin with instructions that it should not be published or played until 100 years after the composer's death. His suppression was successful for more than 75 years.

In 1933, Joachim's grand-niece, concert violinist Jelly d'Áranyi, claimed to have been contacted in séances by Schumann and her great-uncle, both urging her to play the concerto. She further claimed to have had no knowledge of its existence before these supernatural communications. In 1937, Yehudi Menuhin received a copy of the score from a German music publisher and proclaimed it a lost masterpiece. His argument with d'Áranyi over who should give the premiere was rendered moot when the German government decided that a German soloist (Georg Kulenkampff) should introduce it to the world. The Nazis hoped it would take the place in the repertoire held by the violin concerto of Mendelssohn, a composer of Jewish descent. Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels attended the

world-premiere performance in Berlin. Shortly thereafter, Menuhin gave the U.S. premiere; d'Arányi premiered it in London.

Between Menuhin's insistence that the Schumann should be added to the short list of "greatest violin concertos" and the Nazi Party's trumpeting of the piece as an example of German superiority, many critics and listeners were disappointed that it didn't appear to live up to the hype. It has taken many years for the concerto to transcend the baggage and confusion of Joachim's overly negative opinion and its first champions' exaggerated enthusiasm.

Judging Schumann's Violin Concerto on its own merits, it can rightfully be considered a great violin concerto that isn't quite on the masterpiece level of Brahms's. It is similar to the Dvořák Violin Concerto in that the Dvořák is universally acknowledged as a truly great work that is not quite among the handful of very best violin concertos. Dvořák also wrote his concerto for Joachim, who likewise

rejected it over concerns about its quality. Thankfully, unlike with the Schumann, Dvořák's concerto was taken up early on by other violinists and quickly earned its rightful place in the repertoire.

The Violin Concerto in E minor by **Felix Mendelssohn** (1809–1847) was an instant success from the moment of its premiere in 1845 and has never faded in popularity. One of the most beloved violin concertos of all time, it is one of the most frequently performed in the entire repertoire. Mendelssohn began work on it in 1838 and carried on a lengthy correspondence with its dedicatee, his childhood friend Ferdinand David. (We can only imagine to what greater heights the Schumann concerto might have risen had it undergone a similar process!) It took six years of revisions for Mendelssohn to consider his concerto finished.

Interestingly, the key of E minor is also shared by Ferdinand David's Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 10. Yet, aside from both featuring a middle

movement in C major and a finale in E major, there is little resemblance between the two works.

Mendelssohn frequently urged David to tell him if anything in his concerto was awkward, so unnecessary technical challenges would not interfere with the purity of the musical line. The focus on the beauty of the solo violin's lyricism is evident by the unusual choice to forego an opening orchestral tutti and the inclusion of a cadenza that is fully integrated into the fabric of the first movement, flowing out of the development and gracefully eliding into the recapitulation with an arpeggiated accompanimental figure. The typical approach to cadenzas at this time — as in the concertos by Mozart, Beethoven and, later, Brahms — was to allow the soloist to create his or her own improvisation as a display vehicle, following the recapitulation.

Mendelssohn's organic concept of concerto writing is also evident in the connectedness of the whole work. A seamless bridge, beginning

with the woodwinds, leads into the serene second movement, and Mendelssohn inserts a brief, searching Allegretto before the final Allegro. This last movement is a typical Mendelssohnian fairy dance, playful and sparkling. Stylistically, the concerto perfectly balances romantic warmth and passion with classical elegance, restraint, and refinement. The orchestral writing is as ideally conceived as the solo part, and the soloist's occasional pedal point, countermelodies, and sections of passagework are never overwhelmed by thickness of orchestration.

Some have called Mendelssohn's music emotionally lightweight in comparison to that of other great German composers. Mendelssohn had a happy and comfortable existence: his health, finances, family relations, personal life, professional life, and consistent artistic inspiration rarely gave him cause for angst. (The one notable exception was the death of his beloved sister Fanny, in May 1847, from which Felix never recovered; he died six months later.)

Why do some believe that struggle is the only path to enlightenment? Cannot great joy be just as profound as great sorrow? With so many believing that the only true “artists” are those who have suffered, it is ironic that the quality of Schumann’s late works is questioned precisely because of his extreme anguish.

The music of Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) exemplifies the outer limits of both joy and despair. Even his calm and simple Romance in F major for violin and orchestra features a stormy middle section. The Romances in G major and F major were published in 1803 and 1805, respectively, slightly predating his only other completed work for violin and orchestra, the Violin Concerto in D major. Surprisingly little information has been discovered about the history of these well-known works by a major composer. *The Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* gives their conjectured dates of composition as 1801–1802 and 1798, indicating the Romance No. 2 in F major as the earlier piece.

No information currently exists regarding the violinist(s) for whom Beethoven wrote them, or the circumstances that inspired their creation. It has been argued that one or the other may have been intended as a slow movement for Beethoven’s earlier, fragmentary Violin Concerto in C major. Curiously, only one flute is used against pairs of woodwinds in both Romances and both Concertos.

The Romances are both in Rondo form (ABACA), in each case with the main theme varied on the return. The theme of the Romance in F major is a soprano-voice melody accompanied by the orchestra, while the first two iterations of the G major Romance’s theme feature the violin alone in a technically challenging two-voice texture in the instrument’s middle range. In the Romance in G, the soloist has the primary melodic voice until the melancholy C section, where the solo part alternates between the melody and a descant in sixteenth notes. At the end of the final return of the main theme, the soloist’s long trill over the orchestra is reminiscent

of similar moments in the D major Violin Concerto. The Romance in F is more rhetorically and dramatically wide-ranging than the one in G. Both Romances end with orchestra alone: the G major emphatically and the F major gently.

RACHEL BARTON PINE

In both art and life, violinist Rachel Barton Pine has an extraordinary ability to connect with people. Celebrated as a leading interpreter of classical works, her performances combine her innate gift for emotional communication and her scholarly fascination with historical research. She plays with passion and conviction across an extensive repertoire. Audiences are thrilled by her dazzling technique, lustrous tone, and infectious joy in music-making.

Pine has appeared as a soloist with many of the world's most prestigious ensembles including the Chicago, Montreal, Vienna, and Baltimore Symphonies; the Philadelphia Orchestra; the Royal Philharmonic, the Mozarteum, Scottish, and Israel Chamber Orchestras; and the Netherlands Radio Kamer Filharmonie. She has worked with such renowned conductors as Charles Dutoit, Zubin Mehta, Erich Leinsdorf, Neeme Järvi, John Nelson, Marin Alsop, and Plácido Domingo.

Her festival appearances have included Marlboro, Ravinia, and Salzburg. Her recital performances have included the complete Paganini Caprices, all six Bach Sonatas and Partitas, Beethoven's complete works for violin and piano, and the world premiere of the last movement of Samuel Barber's long-lost 1928 Violin Sonata. She regularly plays and records with John Mark Rozendaal and David Schrader as the period instrument ensemble Trio Settecento.

Pine writes her own cadenzas to many of the works she performs, including concertos by Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart, and Paganini. She is the first living composer to be published as part of Carl Fischer's "Masters Collection" with the release of The Rachel Barton Pine Collection, including original compositions, arrangements, cadenzas, and editions penned or arranged by Pine. Pine is also music advisor and editor of "Maud Powell Favorites," the only published compilation of music dedicated to, commissioned by, or

closely associated with Powell, the first native-born American violinist to achieve international recognition.

Pine won the gold medal at the J.S. Bach International Violin Competition (Leipzig, 1992) and holds prizes from several other leading competitions including the Queen Elisabeth (Brussels, 1993), Kreisler (Vienna, 1992), Szigeti (Budapest, 1992), and Montreal (1991) International Violin Competitions. She won honors for her interpretation of the Paganini Caprices at the Szigeti Competition and Paganini International Violin Competition (Genoa, 1993).

Her Rachel Elizabeth Barton Foundation assists young artists through various projects including the Instrument Loan Program, Grants for Education and Career, Global HeartStrings (supporting classical musicians in developing countries), and a curricular series in development with the University of Michigan: The String Students' Library of Music by Black Composers. She teaches chamber music, coaches youth

orchestras, gives master classes, conducts workshops at universities, adjudicates music competitions, creates special programs for children and school groups, and offers spoken program notes or pre-concert conversations for audiences of all ages.

This is Pine's 16th recording for Cedille Records, and the 25th album in her discography.

For more about Rachel Barton Pine, please visit rachelbartonpine.com

CHRISTOPH-MATHIAS MUELLER



The international press ranks Christoph-Mathias Mueller “without a doubt” among “the most gifted and most interesting conductors of his generation” (*Gazeta Kultura*, Moscow) and attests to his “passion” (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*), which, in combination with a compelling precision, enables him to convey works in and off the mainstream to both musicians and the public. Captivating energy, artistic authenticity, and high intellectual standards characterize the style of the Swiss conductor.

Mueller has been the General Music Director of the Göttinger Symphonie Orchester since 2005. Under his leadership the orchestra has become one of the most inspiring ensembles in German-speaking countries. He has

worked intensively and frequently with numerous world-class artists such as Frank Peter Zimmermann, Simone Kermes, Reinhold Friedrich, and Rachel Barton Pine. Mueller regularly guest-conducts on the world’s great stages, his most recent performances including appearances with the Norwegian Radio Orchestra, the Royal Liverpool and Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestras, and the Bolshoi Theater.

A Swiss national born in Peru, Mueller (b. 1967) made his international breakthrough in 2000, winning the International Conducting Competition in Cadaqués, Spain. He received his Master’s degree in violin performance at the Basel College of Music, and his Master of Music in conducting at the University of Cincinnati. In 1995 he perfected his skills as a Conducting Fellow in Tanglewood, Massachusetts, working with Seiji Ozawa, Robert Spano, and Leon Fleisher.

From 2001–2005 Mueller was assistant conductor for the Gustav Mahler Jugendorchester. During the 2004/05 season Mueller served as the Music Director of the Cairo Symphony Orchestra. He made his debut in Moscow with the Russian National Orchestra, and further guest performances have taken him to the stages of the Czech

Philharmonic, Orchestre National de Lyon, Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, Tonhalle Orchestra of Zurich, the German Symphony Orchestra of Berlin, Staatskapelle Weimar, Bremer Philharmoniker, Orchestra of the Hessian Radio of Frankfurt, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Scharoun Ensemble of the

Berlin Philharmonic and the Ensemble Modern. In addition, he has conducted at the Musikverein in Vienna, Tonhalle in Düsseldorf, Philharmonic Hall in Cologne, and in Stavanger, Tokyo, and Seoul.

For more about
Christoph-Mathias Mueller, please visit
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Photo by Thomas Klawunn



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Artists in global demand, including Simone Kermes, Dimitri Ashkenazy, Frank Peter Zimmermann (who was made an honorary member of the GSO in 2001), and Rachel Barton Pine make regular guest appearances in Göttingen. Their presence underlines the international status of the orchestra which, through its exceptionally broad repertoire, highly acknowledged interpretations of contemporary music, numerous first performances, and acclaimed recordings, has established itself as a fixture on the national and international music scene.

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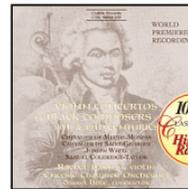


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