
NEWS & INFORMATION

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INTIMATE VIOLIN FROM A COLOSSAL COMPOSER

Handel's Scarce-on-CD Sonatas, Rachel Barton's Cedille Debut

Handel's violin sonatas, familiar to violinists and chamber audiences, have been inexplicably neglected on disc. These intimate, inviting sonatas show the seldom-savored side of a Baroque behemoth best-known for epic extravaganzas.

A rising violinist of wide-ranging repertoire and genuine star quality, Rachel Barton makes her Cedille label debut in a program of eight of Handel's sonatas for violin and continuo, plus two single-movement works (Cedille CDR 90000 032). Accompanied by full "basso continuo," she's joined by cellist John Mark Rozendaal, artistic director of the Chicago Baroque Ensemble, and harpsichordist David Schrader (his 11th Cedille recording).

Ms. Barton was the gold medal winner at the 1992 Ninth Quadrennial J.S. Bach International Violin Competition in Leipzig. "She has an interest in Baroque music and a flair for period style that's rare among today's ascendent virtuosos," says recording producer James Ginsburg. "Ms. Barton contributes original, intelligent, and idiomatic ornamentation, in addition to the tonal beauty, songful phrasing, and rapturous intensity that have become her trademark."

(MORE)

HANDEL VIOLIN SONATAS -- 2

The violin sonatas span Handel's long career, from the early, Corelli-inspired G major Sonata, HWV358 (c. 1706-08) to the exciting Sonata in D major (c.1750). On the CD, the works are sequenced for a pleasing progression of key relationships and mood changes.

The CD opens and closes with sonatas that are authentically Handel's and written expressly for violin: the Sonata in A Major (HWV361), his best-known and most widely played, and the Sonata in D Major (HWV371), notable for its virtuosic treatment of violin and continuo parts and its noble melodic lines. Handel's last violin sonata, it's widely considered his masterpiece in the genre.

Scholars agree that some sonatas were erroneously attributed to Handel. Three of these are included in the program (HWV368, 370, and 372). "Regardless of authorship, they are very beautiful and well worth playing and hearing," cellist Rozendaal writes in the CD booklet. Another, the Sonata in E major (HWV373) is excluded, "not because of its questionable authorship but because of its inferior quality," he adds.

The program also includes several fine (and authentic) pieces from the 1724-26 period: the sonatas in d-minor (HWV359a) and g-minor (HWV364a), the a-minor Andante (HWV412) and the c-minor Allegro (HWV408)

These performances are "historically informed," employing a combination of 18th-century and modern practices and equipment. Ms. Barton plays a 1617 Amati violin, in "modern" condition with steel strings. Mr. Rozendaal plays a 1740 cello in restored Baroque condition with gut strings. The bows used are reproductions of 18th-century models. Mr. Schrader plays a 1983 U.S.-built harpsichord based on one in the museum of the Conservatoire National de Paris.

The CD benefits from the warm, intimate acoustic of the WFMT-FM studios in Chicago, a recording venue that's especially congenial to chamber music, Ginsburg says. The recording engineer was Cedille stalwart Bill Maylone.

(MORE)

HANDEL VIOLIN SONATAS -- 3

The Handel program is Ms. Barton's second recording. Her 1994 debut release, *Homage to Sarasate* (on Dorian) was a critical and commercial success, selling thousands of copies. *CD Review* called it "an endlessly repeatable delight."

Cedille CDs are distributed to retailers by Qualiton Imports and are available at finer record stores nationally. For a free catalog and the whereabouts of local retail outlets, consumers are invited to write to Cedille Records, 5255 N. Lakewood Ave., Chicago, IL 60640-2220, call (773) 989-2515, or send e-mail to cedillerec@aol.com. Cedille Records is now on the World Wide Web at <http://members.aol.com/cedillerec>.

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HANDEL: SONATAS FOR VIOLIN AND CONTINUO

Cedille CDR 90000 032

Sonata in A Major, HWV361 (6:56)
Sonata in D Minor, HWV359a (6:54)
Sonata in F Major, HWV370 (12:32)
Sonata in G Major, HWV358 (4:07)
Sonata in G Minor, HWV364a (6:03)
Allegro in C Minor, HWV408 (2:49)
Sonata in A Major, HWV372 (6:51)
Andante in A Minor, HWV412 (1:26)
Sonata in G Minor, HWV368 (8:30)
Sonata in D Major, HWV371 (10:57)

Rachel Barton, violin

David Schrader, harpsichord

John Mark Rozendaal, cello