

YOUR DIGITAL PROGRAM / TEXT ONLY VERSION

Jennifer Koh

Sun 19 Mar, 2:30pm / UKARIA Cultural Centre

Duration: 1hr, no interval

THIS DIGITAL PROGRAM INCLUDES

Program

Biography

Program

Jennifer Koh, violin

JS Bach

Violin Sonata No. 2 in A minor BWV 1003

Missy Mazzoli

Kinski Paganini

Missy Mazzoli

Dissolve, O My Heart

JS Bach

Violin Sonata No. 3 in C Major BWV 1005

Biography

JENNIFER KOH

Recognised for intense, commanding performances, delivered with dazzling virtuosity and technical assurance, violinist Jennifer Koh is a forward-thinking artist dedicated to exploring a broad and eclectic repertoire, while promoting equity and inclusivity in classical music. She has expanded the contemporary violin repertoire through a wide range of commissioning projects and has premiered more than 100 works written especially for her. Her quest for the new and unusual, sense of endless curiosity, and ability to lead and inspire a host of multidisciplinary collaborators, truly set her apart.

Koh's critically acclaimed series include *Alone Together*, *Bach and Beyond*, *Bridge to Beethoven*, *Limitless*, *Shared Madness* and *The New American Concerto*. This season, Koh continues *The New American Concerto* series, an ongoing, multi-season commissioning project that explores the form of the violin concerto and its potential for artistic engagement with contemporary societal concerns and issues through commissions from a diverse collective of composers. The most recent concerto in the series, Missy Mazzoli's Violin Concerto *Procession*, was premiered with the National Symphony Orchestra led by Gemma New in 2021. Koh has since performed the concerto with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony, Lahti Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Phoenix Symphony, and Philharmonia Orchestra at the BBC Proms. Previous *New American Concerto* commissions include Tyshawn Sorey's *For Marcos Balter*, premiered with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in 2020; Courtney Bryan's *Syzygy*, premiered with the Chicago Sinfonietta in 2020; Lisa Bielawa's *Sanctuary*, premiered with the Orlando Philharmonic in 2019 and given its New York premiere with the American Composers Orchestra at Carnegie Hall in 2021; Christopher Cerrone's *Breaks and Breaks*, premiered with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in 2018; and Vijay Iyer's *Trouble* premiered at the 2017 Ojai Music Festival.

Also this season, as part of Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival, Koh performed the New York premiere of *Everything Rises*, an original, evening length staged musical work co-created with bass-baritone Davóne Tines. The work is a collective exploration of family history—telling the stories of Koh's mother, Gertrude Soonja Lee Koh, a refugee from North Korea during the Korean War, and Tines's grandmother, Alma Lee Gibbs Tines, who holds vivid memories of anti-Black discrimination and violence dating back many years. Developed over multiple years by an all-BIPOC creative team including composer Ken Ueno and director Alexander Gedeon, the project powerfully reclaims Koh and Tines' narratives about who they are and how they got to where they are now.

Koh's Grammy Award-winning *Alone Together*—launched in 2020 as a commissioning project and virtual performance series—was developed in response to the coronavirus pandemic and the financial hardship it placed on many in the arts community. The project brought composers together in support of the many freelancers among them—with the more established composers each donating a new micro-work for solo violin, while also recommending a fellow freelance composer to write their own solo violin micro-work on paid commission from Koh's artist-driven nonprofit ARCO Collaborative. In 2021, Cedille Records released an album of Koh's *Alone Together*, featuring 39 world-premiere recordings, including works by Du Yun, George Lewis, Tania León, Andrew Norman, Missy Mazzoli, Ellen Reid, Vijay Iyer, Nina C. Young, and Angélica Negrón, and the recording won the Grammy Award in the Best Classical Instrumental Solo category. Koh performs works from *Alone Together* this season in cities across the U.S.

Koh regularly performs a broad range of concertos that reflect the breadth of her musical interests from traditional to contemporary. This season she made her Boston Symphony Orchestra debut performing Bernstein's *Serenade*, conducted by Andris Nelsons. She also performs Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with the Richmond and Wichita Falls symphony orchestras. Past orchestral appearances have included performances of such traditional repertoire as Bach's Violin Concerti with Orpheus Chamber Orchestra; Dvořák's Violin Concerto with the Pittsburgh Symphony led by Manfred Honeck and RAI National Symphony with James Conlon; Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 1 with the Los Angeles Philharmonic led by Bramwell Tovey and St. Louis Symphony led by Nicolas McGegan; Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with the Munich Philharmonic led by Lorin Maazel; and Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* with the Detroit Symphony led by Nicolas McGegan.

She has performed 20th century works including Bartók and Berg concerti with the Milwaukee Symphony led by Edo de Waart; Bernstein's Serenade with the Minnesota Orchestra led by Juanjo Mena and the Philadelphia Orchestra led by Yannick Nézet-Séguin; Lutosławski's *Chain 2* with the New York Philharmonic led by Lorin Maazel and the Philharmonia Orchestra with Esa-Pekka Salonen; Scelsi's Anahit with the Los Angeles Philharmonic led by Gustavo Dudamel; and Sibelius's Violin Concerto with the New Jersey Symphony led by Xian Zhang, the São Paulo Symphonies with Marin Alsop, and the Columbus Symphony led by Rossen Milanov. This season, she performs the Sibelius concerto with the Suwon Philharmonic in South Korea. An advocate for music from our current millennium, she has performed Anna Clyne's *The Seamstress* with the BBC Symphony led by Sakari Oramo, the Chicago Symphony led by Ludovic Morlot, and Cincinnati Symphony conducted by Louis Langrée; Esa-Pekka Salonen's Violin Concerto with the Houston Symphony led by Christoph Eschenbach, Nashville Symphony conducted by Giancarlo Guerrero, and Cincinnati and Gothenburg Symphonies conducted by Santtu-Matias Rouvali; and Steven Mackey's *Beautiful Passing* with the Baltimore Symphony under Marin Alsop.

Koh played the role of Einstein in the revival of Philip Glass and Robert Wilson's *Einstein on the Beach* from 2012 to 2014, and a particular highlight of her career was performing with St. Vincent's Annie Clark and S. Epatha Merkerson at the 2018 Kennedy Center Honors in a tribute to Glass. In 2021, nearly a decade after collaborating in the revival performances of Philip Glass's *Einstein on the Beach*, Koh reunited with director Robert Wilson and choreographer Lucinda Childs for a new work, *Bach 6 Solo*, that brings to life Bach's sonatas and partitas with theatrical elements and dance. Conceived by Koh and Wilson, the new work has Koh performing all six of Bach's Partitas and Sonatas—widely considered the pinnacle of solo violin writing and typically performed alone on stage—with dancers performing choreography by and with Childs. *Bach 6 Solo* premiered at the Chapelle Saint-Louis de la Salpêtrière as part of the Festival d'Automne à Paris.

Koh brings the same sense of adventure and brilliant musicianship to her recordings as she does to her live performances. She has recorded more than a dozen albums with Chicago-based Cedille Records, including her Grammy Award-winning *Alone Together* album. Her *Bach & Beyond* recording series, originally released by Cedille Records in three installments (2012, 2015, and 2020), was released as a three-disc box set in September 2021. These recordings explore the history of the solo violin repertoire from Bach's Six Sonatas and Partitas to the music of 20th- and 21st-century composers, including new commissions from Missy Mazzoli (*Dissolve, O My Heart*) and John Harbison (*For Violin Alone*). The collection also includes the world-premiere recording of Kaija Saariaho's *Frisés*, as well as works by Berio, Bartók, and Ysaÿe. Koh first launched *Bach & Beyond* as a three-part recital series in 2009 and she continues to perform these programs regularly. The *Bach & Beyond* recordings have received widespread critical acclaim, with the Chicago Tribune describing them as an "epic traversal of solo violin repertoire" and "a monumental achievement."

Other recordings for the label include 2019's *Limitless*, on which leading composer-performers—including Lisa Bielawa, Vijay Iyer, Missy Mazzoli, Qasim Naqvi, Tyshawn Sorey, Wang Lu, Nina C. Young, and Du Yun—perform duo compositions with Koh that explore the artistic relationship between composer and performer, and a 2018 collection of works by Kaija Saariaho, whose music she has long championed and with whom she has closely collaborated. Titled *Saariaho X Koh*, the album includes the chamber version of the violin concerto *Graal Théâtre* with the Curtis Chamber Orchestra; *Cloud Trio* with violist Hsin-Yun Huang and cellist Wilhelmina Smith; *Tocar* with pianist Nicolas Hodges; *Aure* with cellist Anssi Karttunen, with whom she premiered the violin and cello version in 2015; and *Light and Matter* with both Hodges and Karttunen, with whom she performed the French premiere in 2017.

Her discography on Cedille Records also includes *Tchaikovsky: Complete Works for Violin and Orchestra* with the Odense Symphony Orchestra conducted by Alexander Vedernikov; *Two x Four* in collaboration with her former teacher, violinist Jaime Laredo, and featuring double violin concerti by Bach, Philip Glass, and new commissions from Anna Clyne and David Ludwig; *Signs, Games + Messages*, a recording of violin and piano works by Janáček, Bartók, and Kurtág with Shai Wosner; *Rhapsodic Musings: 21st Century Works for Solo Violin*; the Grammy-nominated *String Poetic*, featuring the world premiere of Jennifer Higdon's eponymous work, performed with pianist Reiko Uchida; Schumann's complete violin sonatas, also with Ms. Uchida; *Portraits* with the Grant Park Orchestra under conductor Carlos Kalmar with

concerti by Szymanowski, Martinů, and Bartók; *Violin Fantasies*, fantasies for violin and piano by Schubert, Schumann, Schoenberg, and saxophonist Ornette Coleman, again with Uchida; and Koh's first Cedille album, from 2002, *Solo Chaconnes*, an earlier reading of Bach's Second Partita coupled with chaconnes by Richard Barth and Max Reger. She is also the featured soloist on a recording of Higdon's *The Singing Rooms* with the Atlanta Symphony led by Robert Spano for Telarc.

Koh is active not only in the concert hall and recording studio, but also as a lecturer, teacher, and curator. In December 2022, it was announced that she is the new Artistic Director of the Kennedy Center's Fortas Chamber Music Concerts. She has been on faculty at the Mannes School of Music since 2018 and has held residencies at Brown, Cornell, Duke, and Tulane Universities, as well as at the Curtis Institute of Music, Oberlin Conservatory and College, and University of California, Santa Barbara. She was the keynote speaker for the Royal College of Music's 2020 "Orchestrating Isolation" conference and the League of American Orchestras' 2018 annual conference.

She is the Founder and Artistic Director of ARCO Collaborative, an artist-driven nonprofit that advocates for inclusivity in classical music. Established in 2014, ARCO Collaborative commissions, develops, and produces new musical works that highlight artists of color and women composers in collaborations that bring forth stories previously unheard in Western art forms. She is also a member of Composers Now's Distinguished Mentors Council and the board of the League of American Orchestras.

Born in Chicago of Korean parents, Koh began playing the violin by chance, choosing the instrument in a Suzuki-method program only because spaces for cello and piano had been filled. She made her debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at age 11. She was *Musical America's* 2016 Instrumentalist of the Year and has also been recently recognized as a Virtuoso Award honoree by Concert Artists Guild in 2020 and "A Force of Nature" by the American Composers Orchestra in 2019. She performed for former First Lady of the United States Michelle Obama and former First Lady of South Korea Kim Yoon-ok in 2011. She was a top prize winner at Moscow's International Tchaikovsky Competition, winner of the Concert Artists Guild Competition, and a recipient of an Avery Fisher Career Grant. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in English literature from Oberlin College and studied at the Curtis Institute, where she worked extensively with Jaime Laredo and Felix Galimir.