

# SHUMAN ASSOCIATES INC

## **JENNIFER KOH Biography (2019–20)**

Recognized 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 diversity and inclusivity in classical music. She has expanded the contemporary violin repertoire through a wide range of commissioning projects, and has premiered more than 70 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.

Ms. Koh continues her critically acclaimed series this season, including *Limitless*, *The New American Concerto*, *Shared Madness*, *Bach and Beyond*, and *Bridge to Beethoven*. Initiated in 2018 at Brooklyn's National Sawdust, *Limitless* is a commissioning project that engages leading composer-performers to write duo compositions that explore the artistic relationship between composer and performer. Performed by Ms. Koh and the composers themselves, these works appear on recording in September 2019, released by Cedille Records. Ms. Koh also performs music from *Limitless* at San Francisco's Herbst Theatre with composer-performers Vijay Iyer and Tyshawn Sorey, and at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth with Mr. Iyer, presented by the Van Cliburn Foundation. *The New American Concerto* is Ms. Koh's 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. This season, as part of the project, she gives the world premieres of Lisa Bielawa's *Sanctuary* with the Orlando Philharmonic and Courtney Bryan's *Szyzgy* with the Chicago Sinfonietta, as well as the New York premiere of Vijay Iyer's *Trouble* with The Knights at the Miller Theater. *The New American Concerto* launched with Ms. Koh's world premiere of *Trouble* at the 2017 Ojai Music Festival, followed by a performance with The Knights at Tanglewood, and has since continued with a new concerto by Christopher Cerrone titled *Breaks and Breaks*, which she premiered with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in May 2018.

In recital, Ms. Koh performs music from her *Bach and Beyond* series, which traces the history of the solo violin repertoire from Bach's Six Sonatas and Partitas to 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century composers, in Rockport, ME and at the International Women's Museum in Washington, DC; and her *Shared Madness* commissioning project, comprising short works for solo violin that explore virtuosity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, written for the project by more than 30 of today's most celebrated composers, at SUNY Fredonia. In addition to experiencing *Shared Madness* in the concert hall, listeners are also able to hear recordings of the premiere performances and interviews between Ms. Koh and the composers via the *Shared Madness* radio show, which originally aired on WQXR's New Sounds (formerly Q2) during the summer of 2017 and remains available on demand. Another important project created by Ms. Koh is *Bridge to Beethoven* which she performs with her frequent recital partner Shai Wosner. *Bridge to Beethoven* pairs the Beethoven's violin sonatas with new and recent works inspired by them to explore the composer's impact and significance on a diverse group of musicians.

Ms. Koh performs a broad range of concertos that reflects the breadth of her musical interests from traditional to contemporary. Highlights of her 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 20<sup>th</sup>-century works including Bartok 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. 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.

This season, she plays Barber's Violin Concerto with the New Haven Symphony conducted by Alasdair Neale and with the Springfield Symphony led by Peter Stafford Wilson, Beethoven's Violin Concerto with the Boulder Philharmonic conducted by Michael Butterman, Philip Glass's Violin Concerto with the Oklahoma City Philharmonic conducted by Alexander Mickelthwate, Esa-Pekka Salonen's Violin Concerto with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra conducted by Edo de Waart, and Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with the Amarillo Symphony led by Jacomo Bairos.

Ms. 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 (Annie Clark) and S. Epatha Merkerson at the 2018 Kennedy Center Honors in a tribute to Mr. Glass. She has also performed for former First Lady of the United States Michelle Obama and former First Lady of South Korea Kim Yoon-ok in 2011.

Ms. Koh brings the same sense of adventure and brilliant musicianship to her recordings as she does to her live performances. She has now recorded thirteen albums, including *Limitless* in the fall 2019, with Chicago-based Cedille Records. Her previous recording for the label, released in 2018, is a 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 Mr. Hodges and Mr. Karttunen, with whom she performed the French premiere in 2017.

Ms. Koh's discography on Cedille Records also includes *Tchaikovsky: Complete Works for Violin and Orchestra* with the Odense Symphony Orchestra conducted by Alexander Vedernikov, *Bach & Beyond* parts 1 and 2 (with Part 3 scheduled for release in 2020); *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 Mr. 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 Ms. Uchida; and Ms. 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. Ms. Koh is also the featured soloist on a recording of Ms. Higdon's *The Singing Rooms* with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra led by Robert Spano for Telarc.

She is active not only in the concert hall and recording studio, but also as a lecturer and teacher. She is in residence this spring at Brown University, during which she will give a solo recital, perform with the university orchestra, and engage with students through master classes, talks, and seminars on topics including contemporary composition. In recent seasons, she has also been in residence at Cornell, Duke, and Tulane Universities, as well as the Curtis Institute of Music, Oberlin Conservatory and College, and University of California, Santa Barbara. In 2018, she was a keynote speaker on diversity and inclusion in classical music at the League of American Orchestras annual conference.

Ms. Koh is the Founder and Artistic Director of *arco collaborative*, an artist-driven nonprofit that fosters a better understanding of our world through a musical dialogue inspired by ideas and the communities around us. The organization supports artistic collaborations and commissions, transforming the creative process by engaging with specific ideas and perspectives, investing in the future by cultivating artist-citizens in partnership with educational organizations. Ms. Koh is 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 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 has been honored as "A Force of Nature" by the American Composers Orchestra and *Musical America's* 2016 Instrumentalist of the Year. Ms. Koh 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.

For further information, visit [jenniferkoh.com](http://jenniferkoh.com).

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