

## Early, Classical and Beyond

### Strings Attached - November 2013

👤 Terry Robbins  
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There is more thoughtful and intelligent playing of the highest order on **Mendelssohn & Schumann Violin Concertos**, where violinist **Rachel Barton Pine** is joined by the **Göttinger Symphonie Orchester** under **Christoph-Mathias Mueller (Cedille CDR 90000 144)**. The two **Beethoven Romances** are also included.

It sometimes seems that there can't be anything left for a soloist to say with the Mendelssohn, but Barton Pine would doubtless disagree; "The older I get," she says, "The more difficult this 'easier' concerto becomes." Her approach here is sensitive and low-key, but no less effective for that. It's thoughtful playing with a light touch, and with tempi that are kept moving; no time for wallowing in sentiment here, but no lack of feeling either.

The Schumann concerto has had a troubled history. Written shortly before Schumann's 1854 suicide attempt that led to his entering the sanatorium in which he would die two years later, it was never fine-tuned to the composer's satisfaction, and was suppressed by its dedicatee, Joseph Joachim, not long after Schumann's death. It resurfaced in Germany in the 1930s due primarily to the efforts of violinists Jelly d'Arányi and Yehudi Menuhin, but plans for a premiere were hijacked by the Nazis, who hoped to promote it at the expense of the Mendelssohn concerto, with its Jewish connection. The concerto has its technical problems, in particular an exceptionally difficult solo part in the last movement which makes an ideal tempo almost impossible, but it has a particularly beautiful slow movement. Mueller was responsible for Barton Pine's deciding to record the work, and the soloist has done her work here, making judicious changes where she felt necessary; in particular, she and Mueller make the final movement work extremely well.

The performances of the Beethoven F major and G major *Romances* follow the approach set in the Mendelssohn, with a clear tone, slow and spare vibrato and a nice sense of movement.

Barton Pine's own extensive and excellent booklet notes contribute to another top-notch Cedille issue.