

## IN CONCERT



HARAZ N. GHANBARI/AP FILE

Violinist Jennifer Koh is set to perform at the Mansion at Strathmore on Thursday.

## Jennifer Koh's romance with Bach ... and Beyond

By Emily Cary  
Special to *The Washington Examiner*

Violinist Jennifer Koh bounds from one brilliant concert to another sharing her artistry and admiration for the teachers who groomed her and the composers who inspire her. No stranger to Washington, she completes her Bach and Beyond series for Strathmore's Music in the Mansion concerts this week. She will continue her tribute to Bach two weeks hence at the Kennedy Center in "Two x Four" with violinist Jaime Laredo, her former teacher at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

The program they plan is built around four works for two solo violins. They will be joined by the Curtis Chamber Orchestra. As graduates of Curtis, both Koh and Laredo are enthusiastic about the orchestra and its history of nurturing many of today's artists.

"Bach is the pinnacle of violin writing," Koh said. "The Partita No. 1 in B minor and the Sonata No. 1 in G minor that I'm playing at Strathmore are the first works he ever wrote for solo violins. I dedicated them to Joe Davis, my first teacher. The program also includes Bartok's Sonata for Solo Violin ... and Phil Kline's Partita for Solo Violin, which I commissioned.

"My purpose in planning the Bach and Beyond series was to find a way of showing the beginning works with the modern ones to define who we have become. Phil Kline and I met six or seven years ago. He's done a lot of sound experimentation, such as a live performance of people carrying boom boxes playing 'Silent Night.' It's about really distilling an idea and putting it into one instrument. I played the premiere of his Partita at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. Because contemporary composers do a lot of rewriting, I'm sure the Strathmore performance will also be a premiere."

The Kennedy Center program

### Onstage Jennifer Koh plays Bach and Beyond Part 2

» **Where:** The Mansion at Strathmore, 10701 Rockville Pike, North Bethesda  
» **When:** 7:30 p.m. Thursday  
» **Info:** \$30; 301-581-5100; strathmore.org

### Jennifer Koh, Jaime Laredo and the Curtis Chamber Orchestra

» **Where:** Kennedy Center Terrace Theater, 2700 F St. NW  
» **When:** 7:30 p.m. March 14  
» **Info:** \$45; 202-467-4600; 800-444-1324; kennedy-center.org

opens with Bach's Concerto for Two Violins, before zooming into the present with Philip Glass' "Echorus" for two solo violins and a string orchestra, followed by two works Koh commissioned from exciting new composers, "Prince of Clouds," by Anna Clyne, and "Seasons Lost," by David Ludwig. The program ends with Tchaikovsky's glorious "Serenade for Strings."

Koh continually commissions new music. Works by John Harbison, Andrew Norman and another by Clyne are involved in what she terms as the "long birthing process" that can take up to four years. She is excited about traveling to Paris in November to perform a new work that is being staged by Robert Wilson. No matter what she plays, she regards it as special.

"Going to a concert and being in a space sharing a collective experience is something beautiful," she said. "I can hear the audience as they are listening. It's transformative."

## THEATER

## A bluesy 'Streetcar Named Desire'

By Emily Cary  
Special to *The Washington Examiner*

Virginia Opera's production of Andre Previn's "A Streetcar Named Desire" arrives at George Mason University's Center for the Arts this week. This third installment in the company's American opera cycle is based on Tennessee Williams' Pulitzer Prize-winning play set in New Orleans during the 1940s.

Baritone David Adam Moore makes his Virginia Opera debut in the role of Stanley Kowalski, opposite soprano Kelly Cae Hogan as Blanche DuBois. Julia Ebner is Blanche's sister, Stella, and tenor Scott Ramsay plays Blanche's suitor, Harold.

"My job is to step inside Stanley to learn what he wants and needs and what matters to him," Moore said. "Everything he does makes perfect sense. He is very much a product of his background, and, even though the facts aren't there, I deduce that he comes from a recent generation of Polish immigrants and grew up in a Polish community on the lower socio-economic rung that made him see things in black and white, a simple right or wrong."

Moore is excited to repeat the role with the Lyric Opera of Chicago later

this spring, allowing him to remain the same character for four months. He follows that as Jud Fry in that company's production of "Oklahoma!" For the first 10 years of his career, he sang 30 roles without repeating, flitting from style to style and language to language. Now that he has a resume of more than 60 roles, he enjoys repeating favorites like Don Giovanni, Prior Walter in "Angels in America" and Vincent Van Gogh, a role he originated in Bernard Rands' "Vincent" as a guest artist with Indiana University's Opera Theater.

To direct "A Streetcar Named Desire," Virginia Opera chose the creative Sam Helfrich, who is returning after directing Philip Glass' "Orpheus" last season. The conductor is the renowned Ari Peltó, a veteran of major opera companies.

"I'm most excited about this production because it's not a literal translation of the play and movie," Helfrich said. "I was more interested in the characters and looking at them under a microscope, so I consciously decided to avoid watching the movie and featuring the apartment in the set. Instead, I am focusing on three objects critical to each character. The first we see is Blanche, followed by Stanley, then Stella.



### Onstage 'A Streetcar Named Desire'

» **Where:** George Mason University Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax  
» **When:** 8 p.m. Friday, 2 p.m. Sunday  
» **Info:** \$44 to \$98; 888-945-2468; cfa.gmu.edu

"The characters will surprise the audience. I see Blanche as being much more sympathetic than she has been portrayed in the past. The music throughout tells you a lot and creates a mood about how the characters feel inside."

Helfrich promises, "A lot of people don't like contemporary opera as a living art form, but I think the VO audience will discover that this production of 'A Streetcar Named Desire' opera will help them to understand it in a new way by seeing it done in an environment that turns Blanche into a sympathetic character."

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