

# STRINGS

FOR PLAYERS OF VIOLIN, VIOLA, CELLO, BASS & FIDDLE

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## SIGNS, GAMES, AND MESSAGES.

Jennifer Koh, violin; Shai Wosner, piano.

*(Cedille)*

Bookended by impossibly beautiful, occasionally kittenish performances of Janacek's Violin Sonata and Bartok's Violin Sonata, No. 1, violinist Jennifer Koh and pianist Shai Wosner lay out 25 spellbinding minutes of music for violin and piano by Gyorgy Kurtag, including substantial bits of his ongoing 50-year musical diary *Signs, Games, and Messages*. Throughout, Kurtag's extraordinary ear for how instruments

produce sound, where the pulses are and the harmonic beats, give Koh opportunities to display her awesome range of color and nuance. It's more than just prettiness—in the first of the Tre Pezzi Op. 14e, the violin does hair-raising things with slow rising double-stops against a thrilling cimbalom-like background. In all these things, as the CD is meant to demonstrate, Kurtag shares with Janacek and Bartok an immersion in national folk elements and an ability to entertain.

This makes all the more appealing Koh's brave exploration of how Kurtag diverges, more sophisticated perhaps, but no less authentically tapping innovatively into roots. His imagination and use of the two instruments is bold and vivid, ranging from moments of reflection that recall Satie in their simplicity and epigrammatic wit to an intense *In Domine* in the Hungarian style.

Andrea Lamoreaux's liner notes explain how folk elements influenced the three composers. Grammy-winning producer Judith Sherman, working at the American Academy of Arts and Letters in New York City,

provides utterly natural, profoundly communicative sound. —L.V.