**RachelBartonPine\_interview.mp3**

[00:00:04] **Speaker 1** I'm at that age. So I understand this is not your first time performing with the La Crosse Symphony. How many times have you been a guest with the LaPras Symphony, and when was the last time, and what did you play?

[00:00:24] **Speaker 2** I was last with the La Crosse Symphony in October of 2018 when we collaborated, no sorry, that's wrong, it was October 2016, okay let me say that again. I was last with the La Crosse Symphony in October of 2016, when we collaborated, okay, just have to get in the groove. I was with the Lacrosse symphony in October 2016, when we collaborate on the third violin concerto of Camille Saint-Saens. And so it's wonderful to be back, but actually my collaboration with Maestro Alexander Platt goes much farther back than that. I performed with his Waukesha symphony a couple of times. And we actually collaborated on my 2004 album, Scottish Fantasies, recorded with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, all of these wonderful Scottish-flavored serious concertos for violin and orchestra. And even though I've made dozens of recordings since then, it seems to be a perennial popular favorite with the public. And so it's always fun to reunite with Alexander because I just love his musicianship, his passion for music. His dedication and commitment. It's always wonderful to work with a musician who just loves music so much. And of course, this May, well, let me say that again. And it was in May of 2004 that we recorded our CD together. Or I shouldn't say CD. It was in may of 2004 when we recorded out album together. So this is actually the album's 21st anniversary. Wow.

[00:02:02] **Speaker 1** Yeah, he spoke about that when we interviewed him as well. Now that was, where was that recorded?

[00:02:10] **Speaker 2** The recording that Maestro Platon and I did of the Brooke Scottish Fantasy and other Scottish fave, hmm, the recording that maestro Plat and I did of The Brooke Scottish fantasy and other Scottish flavored works for violin and orchestra was done with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in Edinburgh at the Usher Hall. So it was a real Scottish project and um yeah he just really helped bring that special Gaelic flavor to life.

[00:02:36] **Speaker 1** Have you worked with him in any other, other than the Waukesha Symphony and the La Crosse Symphony and the recording? Have you had a chance to work with him on other projects or other places? Well, what makes you want to keep coming back to La Cres? Cause you've been here two or three times in the past, I believe.

[00:02:56] **Speaker 2** Well, I always loved soloing with orchestras in Wisconsin. It's such a beautiful state and I live in Chicago. I'm a lifelong Chicagoan, so I have a special patriotic feeling in my heart for anything in the Midwest. But, you know, there's such a wonderful enthusiasm from the public of orchestras like the La Crosse Symphony. It makes it not just an artistically rewarding, but also a very personally rewarding experience for me as a touring artist.

[00:03:24] **Speaker 1** That was wonderful. Thank you. What will you be performing this weekend with the La Crosse symphony?

[00:03:36] **Speaker 2** I never wanna say that one single concerto is my favorite because I love so many different violin concertos, but I have to admit, I have a soft spot for the Brahms concerto. I studied with a student of a student of the concerto's dedicatee, Joseph Joachim, in Berlin during my teenage years. And in my lesson, he would say, well, my teacher said that Joachим said that Brahms said to play it like this. So that was pretty amazing. But I'm also lucky to play an instrument with a special connection to Brahms. I mean, I loved the Brahms concerto long before that, and actually, it was when I was about to record the Brahmm's Violin Concerto with the Chicago Symphony in 2002 that I was first lent this amazing instrument for that occasion, and I fell in love with it and didn't want to give it back, and luckily the owner decided he liked me and the recording, and I've been playing it ever since. So this violin... Was made in the year 1742 by Guarneri del Gesu of Cremona, Italy. Guarnere and Stradivari are considered to be the two greatest makers ever. And it's really just a matter of taste, which one you prefer. Stradiveris have a very, you know, buttery sound, very golden tone quality. And Guarneres are kind of deeper and darker, very rich sort of sound, very powerful instruments. And there are fewer of them than there are of Strads. So if your taste lies in that direction, There aren't enough to go around, so I'm very lucky to be using this one. It's called the ex-Bazzini ex-Soldat, after two of the great artists who played it in the past, Antonio Bazzini, a early 19th century Paganini style virtuoso, and then Marie Soldat, one of the women violin soloists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. And she was actually discovered as a teenager by Brahms who became a mentor to her for the remainder of his life. She was part of his inner circle of chamber musicians with Brahms at the piano and Maurice Aldotte playing violin. It means this violin got to jam with Brahmm's. And in fact, Brahms himself chose it for her. Even back then these instruments could be priced such that they really weren't possible for artists that might deserve them to be able to buy them for themselves. So Brahms found an aristocratic family who agreed to buy an instrument for Maurice Aldott's use and Brahms chose this instrument. So it's amazing to play Brahms's music on an instrument whose voice Brahms particularly loved. But it's also amazing to play the Brahms concerto on an instrument that was one of the first instruments to ever play the Brahms Concerto, because of course the world premiere performance in Berlin, Joseph Joachim, the dedicatee, played the solo part and Brahms himself conducted. The second performance in Berlin, Joachime conducted, and Marie Soldat played the solo part. So she was right there championing this concerto. At its beginning, and it's just such an honor to be able to play this violin. It not only does everything that I could possibly imagine, but it even suggests things to me that I would have never thought of.

[00:06:39] **Speaker 1** So this violin has been playing this symphony for a lot longer than any of the musicians on stage.

[00:06:48] **Speaker 2** Well, none of us were alive when Brahms was, but this violin sure was and it used to play chamber music with Brahms.

[00:06:55] **Speaker 1** That's amazing What is it that makes the Brahms concerto so special to you?

[00:07:04] **Speaker 2** Every violin concerto has its something special about it. And just like you could never eat your fie... Oh, bleh. There's something special about each violin concert and just like you can never eat your favorite food for every single meal. You know, having variety is really key. One week I might play, you know, the elegant and drama of Mozart. The next week I may play something dark like Shostakovich or something really personal like Tchaikovsky or. Or just something celebrating beauty like Mendelssohn. Brahms, for me, is not as personal and intimate as some of the violin concertos. I feel like it's less about describing the human condition and human emotions and more about celebrating something that's larger than ourself. It feels like it is celebrating the majesty of creation and you just feel so elevated when listening to it. What's really interesting about the Brahms concerto is that practicing my own part, a cappella, to prepare for a concert is not as rewarding as with other concertos because Brahms doesn't always give the solo part the melody. Even though, you know, supposedly I'm the star of the show, in this case, it's actually been called a symphony with violin. So it's not, you now, main person and backup band by any stretch. It's really closer to a chamber music collaboration where sometimes... Section of the orchestra or a single wind or brass player will have the melody and I'll be playing some kind of a counter melody and so it's actually in a way more fulfilling to play it with an orchestra because you're really part of things and you have this this deep musical satisfaction but certainly playing a countermelody without the melody going when you're practicing your part alone in your room it's not as automatically appealing as something like Tchaikovsky, but... It's definitely worth it.

[00:09:01] **Speaker 1** And I imagine them with the orchestra, there being so many other solo instruments, that it changes from orchestra to orchestra playing with them.

[00:09:11] **Speaker 2** The case? Absolutely. So one of the great things about the fact that the Brahms Concerto is so symphonically crafted. The fact that there are important moments, beautiful melodies from oboe or from cellos or you know all around the rest of the performers on stage is that every time I play it with a different orchestra it's different musicians playing and it's a little bit different and so I could never get tired of this piece. I could ever get bored with it. It feels fresh every time, no matter how many times I've ever played it before, because it's a new collaboration each time.

[00:09:48] **Speaker 1** And challenging, I imagine, too. You mentioned in your 24 by 24 recordings about having to follow the oboe and having the obo play the melody and then you having to following that at points. I'm just trying to think what should the viewers be watching for and listening for with this concerto? Is there anything special or anything specific that you want to point out?

[00:10:26] **Speaker 2** I think for the audience to truly appreciate this concerto, it's not just a question of giving all of your attention to me with the orchestra in a supportive role, because it is such a partnership between my part and everybody else's part. I think if you just take in the big picture and listen for all the music that's happening all around the stage, with of course the solo violin being at the forefront, but almost more as a tour guide than as... You know, just the main event. And so you're going to really get a rich tapestry of colors and textures, and there's something very transporting about that.

[00:11:09] **Speaker 1** I understand that you write your own cadenzas. What goes into writing a cadenza? Is it written out note for note, or are you improvising like a jazz musician might, and does it change over time?

[00:11:27] **Speaker 2** Questions. So often in violin concertos, there are moments when the violin is playing all by itself. It's a little bit equivalent to the guitar solo in a rock song, except that in the case of cadenzas, the instrumentalist is completely alone, but they are playing some, you know, just fooling around with the different arpeggios and stuff, playing derivations of material that's been heard in the music heretofore. In the olden days, in the time of Mozart, people used to actually improvise their cadenzas based on general rules of how one does that, but just kind of make it up on the spot. Very few people do that these days. I think primarily because we're playing so many different styles of music. Even if all we do is classical, we're play music from many, many different centuries and countries, and so we're not as steeped in just one narrow musical language like they were in. The late 1700s, but then in the 1800s people started composing cadenzas for these moments, whether they were from the concertos from the 1800 to the Romantic concertos or whether they were going back to the Classical period and writing cadenzos for the concerto from the 1700s. And that continued into the 20th century and at a certain point most composers stopped leaving these sort of empty holes. For the performer to do their own thing. Now there are still cadenzas, there are some absolutely great ones in more recent concertos, but composers started writing them themselves and doing it in a little bit different way where architecturally the orchestra would kind of flow into the cadenza and then connect back out of the cadenza so that it wasn't as much like the orchestra stops and then there's this big solo thing and the solo thing kind of ends and then the you know it's not as cut and dry. Brahms was really one of the last concertos ever written for violin, where there was this big pause with a cadenza opportunity. And so, of course, the very first performer of the concerto, Joseph Joachim, his dedicaty, wrote a cadenza, and many people will play Joachims cadenza. I particularly also like the ones by Fritz Kreisler, Eugenie Zay, and my violin hero, Maude Powell from America, from the time of Brahms. But there's nothing more personal than writing your own cadenza." because each of us as performers plays each concerto slightly differently based on not only the traditions of the time and what we believe to be the composer's intentions, but also based on our own individual personality. Each of us is unique as a human, and so therefore only your own cadenza can be truly integrated with your own interpretation. And so I used, when I was younger, I used to worry that, gosh, if I write a cadenza, it might not be as good as the classic ones, Joachim and Kreisler and then I realized I was looking at it all wrong that only my cadenza could be the truest to myself and it's not about comparing mine to anybody else's because only mine is the most me and therefore I always try to encourage young artists to write their own cadenzas because it's just such a fun way to personally express yourself in music. I'm not a real composer like my daughter, I don't have original melodies pouring out of me, I'm never going to write a string quartet or a symphony, but. I love taking composers melodies and making arrangements and making cadenzas and just fooling around with the music. It's a great way to be creative and also to give something a little bit fresh to the audience that they haven't heard before, even if they've heard the Brahms concerto a million times.

[00:15:01] **Speaker 1** Do you ever go back and slightly change the cadenza over time that you've written?

[00:15:08] **Speaker 2** Definitely, as you know, I live life and my artistry continues to evolve through performances and collaborations and, you know just experiencing the ups and downs of existence, you know, my interpretations start to change and that of course includes the interpretations of something I myself have written. I haven't yet. Um, significantly changed my interpretation to a piece such that I would need to write a new cadenza to reflect my new approach, but if that ever did happen, absolutely I would. And actually there was one concerto that I never wrote my own cadenza to for a long time, the Paganini first, because I just loved Soré's cadenza and I just felt like, you know, I would do something similar but not as good if I just tried to write my own. But then I totally changed my interpretation. Of the Paganini after studying with an Italian vocal coach who really knew about the Bel Canto style in Italy from that time that influenced Paganinni. And after that I realized that my interpretation didn't fit with the Sore cadenza at all, even though I still loved it as a piece. And so at that point then I wrote a cadenza for Paganine 1 that was quite a bit different and really fit with my new way of playing Paganini.

[00:16:28] **Speaker 1** That's great. I love to hear about how these things evolve and come into existence and change. During the pandemic, you started your 24 and 24 concertos from the Inside Web Series. Are you currently working on anything similar for social media? And what other projects do you have in the works right now?

[00:16:56] **Speaker 2** The pandemic was, of course, such a difficult time for everyone, but there were many silver linings. I loved the fact that I could do things online that reached people in countries that I've never visited and maybe never will for a long time. I loved to the fact that people could watch concerts who were maybe too old and frail or ill or too young and wiggly to go to a concert. And just this. You know access was such a beautiful thing and I do hope that at some point the world will evolve such that there are more hybrid types of things. I totally understand why everybody was burned out on zoom and streaming and all that and it's so there's nothing that can beat live performance being in the same room as the performers and just getting caught up in the collective emotion of everybody experiencing the concert with you even the acoustics of an orchestra on stage. In a live acoustic can never be replicated digitally. But there's something beautiful about also being able to just watch a variety of things online that you can't get to in person. And educationally, I loved being able to give master classes to people in, you know, other states and other countries. And I've done a little bit of that. You know, there was, gosh, a couple months ago, a random high school in Kentucky who would never have been able to afford to fly me in and put me up just to have me do a workshop with their kids. I did it over the screen and it went really well and I felt that it was of great value and I really enjoyed myself too. So I hope to continue doing more of that. Maybe one day we'll transition to holograms, who knows? But in the meantime, I'm so busy traveling and performing in person that I don't get to do a lot of online concerts per se. But I'm always searching for different ways to connect. I recently made a bunch of videos for a really popular website called ToneBase. Which gives kind of lessons that you can watch on different technical aspects of violin playing or different pieces of repertoire. And so some of the things that I talk about a lot with students about certain kinds of approaches to scales and double stops, I was able to make those videos so that students that I haven't worked with one-on-one can still see me talk all about it. And so that was really exciting.

[00:19:16] **Speaker 1** It is a great teaching tool, a way to reach beyond. Dealing with people in person. Can you tell us a little bit about the Rachel Barton Pined Foundation? When did it start and what are its goals and how's it grown through the years?

[00:19:37] **Speaker 2** I started my Rachel Barton Pine Foundation in 2001 as a way to really give back and pay it forward for some of the help that I had received as a student. I came from a very economically struggling family with a father who was unemployed for most of my childhood and my mom was raising me and my younger sisters and so you know just being able to pay for lessons was basically impossible and I was able to continue my studies thanks to scholarships, but all of the extra things that you need to do. Scholarships don't actually cover those, whether you're talking about strings for your instrument, borrowing an instrument itself so you have something to play on, gas to put in your car to drive to your lessons, concert clothes, piano accompanist fees, sheet music that you have to buy in order to study it, audition recording sessions, the list goes on. And so I was able to scrape by and make it work thanks to various generous supporters, extended family, my church. And so I started my foundation to be able to help young artists who are also aspiring to a life in music, doing really well with their studies, but facing extreme financial difficulties. And then once I had a not-for-profit going, I realized that I could do other things too. And back in 97, I had made an album of violin concertos by black composers of the 17 and 1800s. And that really struck a chord with people. Students, parents, and teachers starting sort of asking me where they could find this repertoire and people just hadn't known that these composers existed from way back when. And I realized there were literally hundreds of wonderful composers of African descent from all over the planet, from all throughout the centuries, and there is a lot of fantastic work being done in this area of music history by various researchers, but it really wasn't filtering out into the general population with usable pedagogical materials. And access to music that might exist only in manuscript because of lack of opportunity back in the day or it might be out of print. So I started my Music by Black Composers project also in 2001 and it's just been really exciting to be able to publish violin beginner books and now more advanced books to be able to create all of our free online databases of everything from podcasts about... You know, diverse repertoire, children's books, our coloring book of black composers. There's just so much that you can find on our website, and we've got lots more to do. And, you know, during the pandemic, I didn't have to Netflix binge or bake. I could just keep on going with my research. And we've flute volumes that are about to come out now. We just had some piano books of music by the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, Joseph Bologna from the time of Mozart in France. There's just one exciting thing after the other and I just love that I can do something that kind of weds my love of history and music research with my love classical music access and of course music education. And so there's resources for performers, for teachers, for students and we've done a lot. I'm so proud of the work of my colleagues who've been helping with the project and I'm so grateful to all of the generous donors who've helped make it all possible. And I'm so excited about all that we are still planning to do.

[00:23:08] **Speaker 1** Do you ever sleep? It seems like you've got so much going on that just so many different things and so many avenues that you are touching people with music. It's incredible.

[00:23:24] **Speaker 2** I feel so incredibly lucky to be living my dream, really. This is the life I always wanted to have, being able to play lots of concerts for people and in the concert halls and beyond. I have a concert next week at a homeless shelter, and that means just as much as a big 1,000 seat concert hall. And being able to uplift people's spirits with music is what it's really all about, and then being able to encourage the next generation. And explored different repertoire, whether it's newly written pieces or historic things that have been heretofore under-recognized. You know, it's just so exciting to be able to get to do all that I do. And it's so amazing that I get to live my life this way.

[00:24:08] **Speaker 1** Thank you. I just have one more question. I couldn't let you go without asking you about that I read in addition to classical music you have an affinity for heavy metal and what are some of your favorite heavy metal bands? I understand you have collaborated with some of the musicians. Can you talk a little bit about that?

[00:24:35] **Speaker 2** Well, classical, of course, is my number one favorite kind of music. My second favorite music is Chicago blues and my third favorite music, sorry, my fourth favorite music in Scottish fiddling and right in between there. My third favorite Music is heavy metal, specifically certain sub genres, particularly thrash. So I love, you know, guys like Slayer, Anthrax, Megadeth, Pantera, Sepultura. And you know this is the music that I grew up with. Ever since Santa Claus brought me a transistor radio when I was 10 years old and I started exploring up and down the dial and found metal and that was that. And I always thought it was just something to kind of get pretty far away from classical after studying classical all day that I would just rock out. But it turns out that a lot of the more complex subgenres of heavy metal are actually very indebted to classical music, very inspired by it. And I've had the opportunity to meet many of my favorite bands. Hear about their favorite classical composers and they don't just stop at Bach and Beethoven. They're talking about Isai and Locatelli and Tartini and you know, barely is Rachmaninoff enlist. And you know it's like, okay, you know this makes sense because you can hear it in their music when you stop and actually analyze it which sometimes I don't, I just rock out. And it's fun to play that music on my violin not as any kind of a crossover artist because that's not really where my heart is but as a way to show the connections between rock and classical and encourage my fellow rock fans to give classical a try because actually one of the coolest stories is the Brahms Violin Concerto, the one I'm playing with La Crosse Symphony because I was in Germany one day hanging out with the lead guitarist of the Scorpions, Uli John Roth, one of their really legendary electric guitar players, and he was telling me how there's this moment halfway through the first movement of Brahms concerto that has this kind of lick. And he started using that lick in his guitar solos and then Eddie Van Halen started copying him and then everybody, of course, started copying Van Halin. And now when you hear that lick, it actually is from the Brahms Violin Concerto and everybody uses it. So there's this incredible influence that classicals had beyond its own genre, which is so cool. And of course it's also fun to just play loud. And for a number of years, I was a member of Earth and Grave. And we were just straight up classical. I was playing a six string electric violin so I could play the lead solos, what would have been a guitar solo, except I was doing it. I could the really low riffs and I could have a clean sound and duet with the vocalist in a more lyrical way. So electric violin is actually so much more versatile than any other instrument of a band. And we made an album that I'm still very proud of. We got to open for Megadeth one time, which was really fun. That was actually in Wisconsin. And we got to have all kinds of adventures. So, um, that was, I was really, really grateful for those years. And that what was particularly rewarding was the process of collective songwriting because in classical one person composes everybody's parts, but in a band, one person might have an idea for one riff. One person throws in another. You might all decide how many times you do something before you go to the bridge. You each add your own layers of your own parts on top of the main riff. And it's this collective process of developing a song and having combined creativity. And that's something that was a really new and really interesting experience for me.

[00:28:18] **Speaker 1** When you play heavy metal out of violin, do you detune it like so many guitarists do for heavy metal?

[00:28:26] **Speaker 2** Actually, my band Earth and Grave was Doom mixed with Thrash, and so we did downtune, but since I didn't have the guitar notes of my strings in the first place, I just stayed with my normal strings. D is actually a really good key for the violin, in some ways better than E, so I was perfectly happy to keep the violin with its with its usual notes.

[00:28:51] **Speaker 1** Well, I think that's everything, unless there was anything that you wanted to say about performing with the La Crosse symphony, but I think I've kept you here long enough. You have been wonderful, thank you so much.

[00:29:08] **Speaker 2** All right.