

# MELIA WATRAS

## BIOGRAPHY (Full length)

Described as “staggeringly virtuosic” by *The Strad*, violist **Melia Watras** ([meliawatras.com](http://meliawatras.com)) has distinguished herself as one of her instrument’s leading voices: as a soloist, recording artist, and co-founder of the acclaimed Corigliano Quartet. An accomplished and adventurous performer, Watras has championed the works of living composers throughout her career. She has commissioned, premiered and recorded numerous new compositions, while appearing onstage at prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall, Weill Recital Hall, and Alice Tully Hall. Highlights of the upcoming season include the New York City premiere of Pulitzer Prize-winner Shulamit Ran’s *Perfect Storm* (a solo viola piece that was written for and given the world premiere by Watras), and the release of *Short Stories*, Watras’s third solo CD.

Watras’s expanding discography has garnered considerable attention and praise from the media. Of her debut solo CD, *Viola Solo, Strings* remarked, “Watras is a young player in possession of stunning virtuosic talent and deserving of the growing acclaim.” *The Strad* called her “excellent” and “authoritative,” while the *American Record Guide* proclaimed, “Watras is a terrific violist.” For the CD, Watras adapted John Corigliano’s *Fancy on a Bach Air* for viola. Her edition of this work is published by G. Schirmer, Inc. Watras’s second solo CD, *Prestidigitation*, features world premiere recordings of five works written especially for her and was described by *Strings* as “astounding, and both challenging and addictive to listen to.” Her third disc, *Short Stories*, includes short, stylistically diverse works from composers ranging from Henri Vieuxtemps to Gyorgy Ligeti.

With the Corigliano Quartet, Watras has concertized extensively throughout the United States and abroad, performing to much critical acclaim. Described as “musicians who seem to say ‘Listen to this!’” by the *New York Times*, the quartet’s Naxos label CD was named one of the Ten Best Classical CDs of the Year by *The New Yorker* and prompted *Gramophone* to proclaim, “the unbridled force and full-metal virtuosity that the Corigliano Quartet unleash on this music is astounding.” The group’s numerous awards include the Grand Prize at the Fischhoff Competition and the ASCAP/CMA Award for Adventurous Programming. The Corigliano Quartet has recorded for Naxos, Albany, Bayer, CRI, Riax, and Aguava and has appeared on NPR’s *All Things Considered* and *Performance Today* and WFMT-Chicago’s *Live from Studio One*.

A versatile performer, Watras has enjoyed collaborations with dance and theater. She played viola and danced in the premiere of Kathryn Sullivan’s *At Home*, at the Merce Cunningham Studio in New York City. Music from her *Viola Solo* CD was featured in director Sheila Daniels’s production of *Crime and Punishment* at Intiman Theatre, and she worked as music consultant for Braden Abraham’s production of *Opus* at Seattle Repertory Theatre.

Melia Watras was born in Honolulu, Hawaii and began her musical studies on the piano at age 5. Soon after, she turned to the viola and made her debut at age 16, soloing with the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra. Her formal studies took her to Indiana University, where she studied with Abraham Skernick and Atar Arad, earning Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees and the prestigious Performer’s Certificate. While at Indiana, Watras began her teaching career as Professor Arad’s Associate Instructor, and was a member of the faculty as a Visiting Lecturer. She went on to study chamber music at the Juilliard School while serving as a teaching assistant to the Juilliard String Quartet.

Watras serves as Associate Professor of Viola at the University of Washington, where she is chair of Strings, and a Donald E. Petersen Endowed Fellow. Watras currently resides in Seattle with her husband, Corigliano Quartet violinist Michael Jinsoo Lim. She plays a viola made by Samuel Zygmuntowicz.

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