

MELIA WATRAS

BIOGRAPHY (Condensed)

Described as “staggeringly virtuosic” by *The Strad*, violist **Melia Watras** (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,” while *The Strad* called her “excellent” and “authoritative.” 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.” With the Corigliano Quartet, she 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*. The quartet’s Naxos label CD was named one of the Ten Best Classical Recordings of the Year by *The New Yorker*. The group’s numerous awards include the Grand Prize at the Fischhoff Competition and the ASCAP/CMA Award for Adventurous Programming.

A versatile performer, Watras has enjoyed collaborations with dance and theater. She has appeared as violist/dancer at the Merce Cunningham Studio in New York City, served as music consultant at the Seattle Repertory Theatre, and had music from her *Viola Solo* CD featured in a production at Intiman Theatre.

Watras studied with Atar Arad at Indiana University and served as a teaching assistant to the Juilliard String Quartet while at the Juilliard School. She is currently Associate Professor of Viola, chair of Strings, and a Donald E. Petersen Endowed Fellow at the University of Washington School of Music.

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