
THE TACOMA (WA) WEEKLY

Thursday, November 3, 2005

Violist Melia Watras brings masterpieces to life at UPS

By Tacoma Weekly Staff Writers

Internationally acclaimed violist Melia Watras will perform at the University of Puget Sound on Friday, Nov. 4. The program, *Rarely Heard Viola Masterpieces*, will begin at 7:30 p.m. in Schneebeck Concert Hall.

Watras, who recently recorded her debut solo CD, "Viola Solo," describes her Puget Sound recital as a collection of works by composers who knew how to write exceptional viola music. "These are pieces that really deserve more performances and I hope to spark some interest in them," she says.

The program will open with Max Reger's *Suite No. 3 in e minor for Solo Viola*, a piece comprised of four short but very distinct movements.

Watras and her husband, Michael Jinsoo Lim, will perform Robert Mann's *Invocation for Violin and Viola*. Mann is founder and former first violinist of the legendary Juilliard String Quartet. Watras and Lim worked with Mann when their quartet – the Corigliano Quartet – was in residence with the Juilliard Quartet.

"Although Mr. Mann had already retired from the quartet when we got there, he was and still is an active teacher at The Juilliard School," Watras says. "Our quartet always learned when we played for him." Watras decided to include *Invocation*, a piece written for Mann's daughter's wedding, in honor of Juilliard's 100th anniversary.

The program also will include Ludwig van Beethoven's *Notturmo*, which Watras will perform with pianist Kimberly Russ. *Notturmo* was written for string trio and is thought to have

been transcribed for viola by Beethoven's students.

"Although Beethoven wrote 10 great sonatas for violin and piano, he never wrote any viola sonatas, so *Notturmo* is as close as a violist can get to performing a Beethoven sonata," says Watras. "It's a beautiful and powerful piece."

Watras has long been at the forefront of the American new music scene, performing numerous commissions and world premieres as a soloist and co-founder of the Corigliano Quartet. She has performed in Carnegie Hall, Weill Recital Hall, Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, and the Kennedy Center.

Watras attended Indiana University, where she studied with Abraham Skernik and Atar Arad, earning bachelor's and master's degrees and a prestigious performer's certificate. She went on to study chamber music at The Juilliard School, while working as an assistant to the Juilliard String Quartet. She later served as musical artist in residence at Dickinson College and on the faculty of the New York Youth Symphony Chamber Music Program. In 2004 Watras was appointed assistant professor of music at the University of Washington, where she teaches viola and chamber music.

Admission to the concert is \$12, with discounts for students, Puget Sound faculty and staff, and senior citizens. Tickets are free for University of Puget Sound students.

Tickets are available at Wheelock Information Center; remaining tickets will be available at the door. For credit card orders, call 253.879.3419.