

MELIA WATRAS

BIOGRAPHY (Condensed)

Hailed by *Gramophone* as “an artist of commanding and poetic personality” and by *The Strad* as “staggeringly virtuosic,” violist/composer Melia Watras has distinguished herself as one of her instrument’s leading voices. She has performed in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Weill Recital Hall, and Alice Tully Hall, while achieving acclaim as an established recording artist. Her latest album *Schumann Resonances*, described by the *American Record Guide* as “a rare balance of emotional strength and technical delicacy,” features world premiere recordings of her own compositions. Watras has helped expand the viola repertoire, through composing, commissioning and debuting new works, including a recent world premiere of a viola concerto written for her by Richard Karpen, with conductor Ludovic Morlot and the Seattle Symphony. In 2020, Watras and Ensemble Dal Niente will give the first performance of Joel Durand’s composition for solo viola and ensemble, also written for Watras.

Watras’s discography has received considerable attention from the press and the public. *The Strad* called *26* “a beautiful celebration of 21st century viola music.” *Ispirare*, which features the world premiere recording of Pulitzer Prize-winner Shulamit Ran’s *Perfect Storm* (written for Watras), made numerous Best of 2015 lists, including the *Chicago Reader*’s (“Watras knocked the wind out of me with the dramatically dark beauty of this recording”). *Short Stories* was a *Seattle Times* Critics’ Pick, with the newspaper marveling at her “velocity that seems beyond the reach of human fingers.” Of her debut solo CD (*Viola Solo*), *Strings* praised her “stunning virtuosic talent” and called her second release (*Prestidigitation*) “astounding and both challenging and addictive to listen to.”

Watras’s compositions have been performed in New York City, Chicago, Seattle, Bloomington (IN), Denmark and Spain, by artists such as violist Atar Arad, pianist Winston Choi, cellist Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir, singer Galia Arad and violinists Manuel Guillén, Yura Lee and Michael Jinsoo Lim. Her music has been heard on National Public Radio’s *Performance Today*, and can be found on the albums *Schumann Resonances* and *26*. Watras’s adaptation of John Corigliano’s *Fancy on a Bach Air* for viola is published by G. Schirmer, Inc. and can be heard on her *Viola Solo* album.

Watras is violist of the Seattle-based ensemble, Frequency, for whom she has composed. For twenty years, Watras concertized worldwide and recorded extensively as violist of the renowned Corigliano Quartet, which she co-founded. The ensemble’s album on the Naxos label was honored as one of the Ten Best Classical Recordings of the Year by *The New Yorker*.

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 Professor of Viola and chair of Strings at the University of Washington School of Music, where she holds the Adelaide D. Currie Cole Endowed Professorship and was previously awarded the Donald E. Petersen Endowed Fellowship and the Royalty Research Fund. Watras has given viola and chamber music classes at schools such as Indiana University, Cleveland Institute of Music, Strasbourg Conservatoire (France), and Chosun University (South Korea). She frequently returns to her alma mater, Indiana, to teach as a guest professor.

—August 2019