
STRINGS

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Melia Watras: Ispirare

By Laurence Vittes

Aided and abetted by her talented friends, violist Melia Watras presents a provocative, relentlessly absorbing recital of profoundly expressive, experience-laden music that could only be written for the dark-voiced instrument that she plays. The program is based on connections between composers and colleagues who have been influential in her life; the music is highlighted by the world premiere recording of Shulamit Ran's eventful, ten-minute musical narrative, "Perfect Storm," for viola solo.

Commissioned by Watras, Ran specifically paired it with Luciano Berio's "Black is the color," from his *Folk Songs*.

The program begins with the powerful moods of Rochberg's Viola Sonata from 1979, and closes with Berio's *Naturale* for viola, percussion and recorded Sicilian folk singer. Also on the menu, the fourth Caprice for viola

solo by Atar Arad, Watras' teacher at Indiana University, quotes Rochberg's sonata and includes a musical reference to the composer by setting the caprice (with the exception of the opening phrase) entirely on the G string.

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The recording, made at Benaroya Hall, where the Seattle Symphony plays, captures the sound of Watras' 2001 Samuel Zygmuntowicz viola. The clarity of the recording illuminates the flashes of light within the musical darkness.

The liner notes are short but exemplary.