

**Melia Watras: Short Stories**  
By Greg Cahill

In the liner notes to this wonderfully diverse 16-track recording—ranging from works by Henri Vieuxtemps and George Enescu to Rebecca Clarke and Dan Visconti—violinist Melia Watras writes that her intent was to create a collection that “shows the viola’s warmth and depth, while also display it’s virtuosity and expressive capabilities.” She accomplishes those

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goals quite admirably with the thoughtful accompaniment of pianist Kimberly Russ. And when it comes to that “virtuosic” label, Watras fits that bill in every sense of the word, from her technical command of the instrument to her considerable interpretive skills.

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And this love letter to the viola, and many of the composers who embrace the beauty of its tone, challenges anyone to make the case that no one writes great music for the viola. For starters, there is a pair of works by two well-known Romantic-era violinists—Vieuxtemps and Henryk Wieniawski—not typically known for their viola playing, much less their viola compositions. But the music featured here also ranges from the cascading waterfall effect of Enescu’s playful Concert Piece for viola and piano (1906) to Quincy Porter’s Speed Etude for viola and piano (1948) to the edgy drama of Andrew Wagoner’s “Elle s’enfuit” for viola and piano (2008). Throughout, Watras shows that the viola has no limits in terms of emotional range and expression.

These are, quite simply, great stories told with power and passion.