

Compact disc

F737

2016

10-23

W SCHOOL OF MUSIC
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

Frequency

Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir, cello

Michael Jinsoo Lim, violin

Melia Watras, viola

and guests

Cordula Merks, violin

Cristina Valdés, piano

Present

The Kreutzer Sonata

Sunday, Oct. 23, 2016

7:30 pm

Meany Theater

2016-17
SEASON

UW MUSIC

PROGRAM

CD#17,547

1 Improvisation on Tolstoy 5:23(Lim/Watras)

Lim, Watras

2 Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 9 in A Major, Op. 47 "Kreutzer" Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

3 Adagio sostenuto-Presto

36:23

4 Andante con Variazioni

5 Finale: Presto

Lim, Valdés

INTERMISSION

CD#17,548

1 Remarks

Kreutzer for violin, viola and cello (2016)* 15:38Melia Watras (b. 1969)

2 Adagio-Ardente

3 Danza

4 Lento

5 Allegro agitato

Lim, Watras, Thorsteinsdóttir

String Quartet No. 1 "The Kreutzer Sonata" 19:24 Leoš Janáček (1854-1928)

6 Adagio-Con moto

7 Con moto

8 Con moto-Vivo-Andante-Tempo I

9 Con moto

Lim, Merks, Watras, Thorsteinsdóttir

*World Premiere

Program Notes

A warm welcome to you all from Frequency! Tonight's program centers around Beethoven's monumental *Kreutzer* Sonata, for violin and piano, which takes its name from Rudolphe Kreutzer, the famed French violinist to whom the piece was dedicated. Kreutzer, however, was not the work's original dedicatee, nor did he ever perform it. The sonata was first dedicated to violinist George Bridgetower, who premiered the piece in 1803 with Beethoven at the piano. The two had a falling out soon after the premiere, when Bridgetower made insults about a woman that Beethoven was fond of; Beethoven was enraged and rededicated the work to Kreutzer.

Beethoven's work figures prominently in Leo Tolstoy's novella entitled *The Kreutzer Sonata*, published in 1889. Inspired by Tolstoy's book, Leoš Janáček wrote his first string quartet in 1923. The quartet was not Janáček's first attempt at creating a work based on Tolstoy: a piano trio written fifteen years prior to the quartet (but now lost) used the same inspiration, and the composer reportedly used material from the trio when writing his quartet.

Tonight's program also features two never-before-heard pieces of music: *Kreutzer*, a new trio composed specifically for this concert by Frequency violist Melia Watras, and an improvised piece (Melia and I will begin the program with an improvisation inspired by Tolstoy's words). Melia's notes on these pieces are below.

Many thanks to the University of Washington School of Music and Director Richard Karpen.

—Michael Jinsoo Lim

Improvisation on Tolstoy

In my weekly studio class, improvisation plays an important role. I'm delighted when my students surprise me with their creations, which they often do.

For one project, my student Yi Zhou had the concept that she and her colleague, Emmeran Pokorny, would look at a piece of poetry while they played. The audience would not see the poem, and they would have no other parameters other than creating spontaneous music as a response to the words they were reading on the music stand in front of them.

When we decided to put an improvisation on the program, we were inspired by Yi's concept, given the literary component on tonight's concert. Instead of poetry, we are improvising to Tolstoy's words, which are shared with the audience.

The quote Mike and I are responding to is from Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata*, a controversial work that was initially banned by Russian censors. Tolstoy's work explores some of the author's unflinching

views on religion, marriage and the role of art. Tonight, Mike and I will improvise on this excerpt from Tolstoy's novella:

I wanted her not to want what she couldn't help wanting. It was complete and utter madness.
–from Leo Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* (Chapter XXV, translated by David McDuff)

–Melia Watras

Watras: Kreutzer for violin, viola and cello (2016)

Kreutzer traces a path of influence of Beethoven's ninth sonata for violin and piano: Beethoven inspired Tolstoy's novella *The Kreutzer Sonata*, which in turn inspired Janáček's String Quartet No. 1 (subtitled *The Kreutzer Sonata*); all three of these works have inspired countless other artists in many mediums.

My piece, *Kreutzer* consists of four movements, each containing related source material. Janáček opens the third movement of his string quartet with a reference (in canon) to Beethoven's second theme of the first movement of the sonata. I created a motive that I derived from the above two phrases, and use all three to form the DNA of the piece.

Rudolphe Kreutzer, the French violin virtuoso to whom Beethoven dedicated his sonata, never performed the piece, though he is known to virtually every string player today, through his important *42 Etudes* for violin. In part due to this immense contribution he made to the art of violin playing, I wanted to include a reference to Kreutzer himself, by including a quote from one of his famed etudes. Dazzling and meaningful in it's own way, it is, at first, unrelated to everything else in the work, reflective of the violinist whose name is forever connected to a masterpiece that he never played.

–Melia Watras

Biographies

Frequency is a new Seattle-based ensemble, joining together distinguished artists from two acclaimed chamber groups, the Corigliano Quartet and Decoda. Made up of Michael Jinsoo Lim (violinist and artistic director), Melia Watras (violinist) and Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir (cellist). Frequency is a modular chamber music group, breaking into different parts to present solos, duos and trios, while also expanding with renowned guest artists to perform in a variety of formations. Frequency members have performed as soloists and chamber musicians worldwide, in leading concert halls such as Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Weill Recital Hall, Suntory Hall, and Disney Hall. The ensemble begins presenting innovative, invigorating and intriguing concerts in the 2016-17 season.

Michael Jinsoo Lim, violin

Violinist **Michael Jinsoo Lim** has been praised by *Gramophone* for playing with "delicious abandon" and described as "bewitching" by the *Seattle Times*. He is concertmaster and solo violinist of the Pacific Northwest Ballet Orchestra ("surely the best ballet band in America"—*New York Times*) and is in-demand as a chamber musician and performer of new music. Hailed by the *Los Angeles Times* as a "conspicuously accomplished champion of contemporary music" for his work as co-founder of the renowned Corigliano Quartet, Lim is also artistic director and violinist of the Seattle-based ensemble Frequency.

Recent performance highlights include the world premiere of Andrew Waggoner's violin concerto (written for Lim), live performances on Danish Public Radio and appearances as soloist for the Stravinsky violin concerto at New York's City Center, as part of Pacific Northwest Ballet's 2016 NYC tour. Lim's 2016-17 season will include performances of concertos by Prokofiev and Stravinsky with PNB.

As a member of the Corigliano Quartet, Lim has won numerous awards, including the Grand Prize at the Fischhoff Chamber Music Competition and the ASCAP/CMA Award for Adventurous Programming, and has performed in the nation's leading music centers, including Carnegie Hall, Weill Recital Hall, and the Kennedy Center. The quartet's Naxos label CD was honored as one of *The New Yorker's* Ten Best Classical Recordings of the Year.

As a theater artist, Lim appeared in director Nick Schwartz-Hall's *Tempo of Recollection*, a show about composer Erwin Schulhoff, and served as music consultant for Seattle Repertory Theatre's production of *Opus*, directed by Braden Abraham. Lim has performed onstage with Pacific Northwest Ballet in George Balanchine's *Duo Concertante* and Christopher Wheeldon's *After the Rain*. Lim has also worked as a record producer on three critically acclaimed albums by violist Melia Watras and co-producer on a fourth.

Lim attended Indiana University, where he was a pupil of the legendary Josef Gingold. He later studied chamber music at the Juilliard School and taught there as an assistant to the Juilliard String Quartet. He currently serves on the faculty of Cornish College of the Arts. Lim has recorded for Naxos, DreamWorks, Albany, Bridge, CRI, Bayer Records, RIAX and New Focus, and has been heard on NPR programs such as *Performance Today* and *All Things Considered*.

Melia Watras, viola

Hailed by *Gramophone* as "an artist of commanding and poetic personality" and described as "staggeringly virtuosic" by *The Strad*, violist **Melia Watras** has distinguished herself as one of her instrument's leading voices. She has performed in major venues such as Carnegie Hall, Weill Recital Hall, and Alice Tully Hall, while achieving acclaim as an important recording artist. Watras has recorded 5 albums, while performing on 13 others as a chamber musician. Recent and upcoming highlights

include the release of her latest disc from the Sono Luminus label, 26, which features world premiere recordings of her own compositions, and video projects with violist Garth Knox (performing with Knox on his duos, *Viola Spaces for Two*) and video artist Ha Na Lee.

Watras's discography has received considerable attention and praise from the media. *Ispirare*, which features the world premiere recording of Pulitzer Prize-winner Shulamit Ran's *Perfect Storm* (a piece that was 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."

As a composer, Watras's music has been performed in New York City, Chicago, Seattle, Bloomington (IN), Denmark and Spain, by artists such as violist Atar Arad, cellist Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir and violinist Michael Jinsoo Lim, and has been recorded for two upcoming CDs. With the Corigliano Quartet, Watras has concertized and recorded extensively, with the ensemble's Naxos label CD being named one of the Ten Best Classical Recordings of the Year by *The New Yorker*. She is violist of Frequency, for whom she has also composed, and a member of Open End, with whom she has performed in France, Denmark and the United States and recorded for Albany Records.

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 has thrice returned to her alma mater, Indiana, to teach as a guest professor.

Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir, cello

"Riveting" (*New York Times*) cellist, **Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir**, has appeared as soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Toronto and Iceland Symphonies, and her recital and chamber music performances have taken her across the US, Europe and Asia. Following the release of her debut recording of Britten's Suites for Solo Cello on Centaur Records, she has performed in some of the world's greatest halls including Carnegie Hall, Suntory Hall and Disney Hall. The press have described her as "charismatic" (*New York Times*) and praised her performances for their "emotional intensity" (*Los Angeles Times*).

As a chamber musician, she has collaborated with Itzhak Perlman, Mitsuko Uchida, Richard Goode and members of the Emerson, Guarneri and Cavani Quartets, and has performed at numerous chamber music festivals, including Prussia Cove and Marlboro (with whom she has toured). She is cellist of Frequency and the Manhattan Piano Trio, and founding member and co-Artistic Director of the acclaimed New York-based chamber ensemble Decoda.

Along with masterpieces of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, Thorsteinsdóttir inspired by music of our time and enjoys collaborating with living composers. In addition to working with Daniel Bjarnason on his award-winning composition "Bow to String", she has premiered dozens of works, including pieces by Peter Schikele, Paul Schoenfield, Kendall Briggs and Jane Antonia Cornish.

Thorsteinsdóttir has garnered top prizes in international competitions, including the Naumburg Competition in New York and the Antonio Janigro Competition in Zagreb, Croatia. She received a Bachelor of Music from the Cleveland Institute of Music, a Master of Music from The Juilliard School and a Doctorate of Musical Arts from SUNY Stony Brook. Her principal teachers include Richard Aaron, Tanya L. Carey and Joel Krosnick. Thorsteinsdóttir currently serves on the faculty of the University of Washington in Seattle, where she teaches cello and chamber music. Thorsteinsdóttir was a fellow of Ensemble ACJW–The Academy, a program of Carnegie Hall, The Juilliard School, and the Weill Music Institute in partnership with the New York City Department of Education—performing chamber music at Carnegie Hall and bringing classical music to New York City Public Schools.

Born in Reykjavik, Iceland, Thorsteinsdóttir moved to the states as a child—however, she still has family in Iceland and enjoys returning, both for concerts and family visits.

Cordula Merks, violin

Violinist **Cordula Merks** joins the University of Washington School of Music in Fall 2016 as an artist-in-residence in the strings program.

Assistant concertmaster of the Seattle Symphony, Merks joined the first violin section of the Seattle Symphony in May of 2011. Before moving to Seattle, she held concertmaster positions with Germany's Essen Philharmonic, Bochum Symphony and Bergische Symphony. She has served as a guest concertmaster for many orchestras, including the Dresden Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, West German Radio Orchestra, Cologne Opera and Portuguese National Opera. This last summer she played as part of Claudio Abbado's famous Lucerne Festival Orchestra and toured in Europe as concertmaster of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra.

When not playing in the orchestra, Merks enjoys playing as a soloist and especially as a chamber musician and has performed in the US, Israel and all over Europe.

Merks was born in Germany and spent her childhood in Holland. She started playing the violin at the age of 6 and was accepted by the Young Talent Department of the Royal Conservatory in The Hague at the age of 12. Her teachers have included Shmuel Ashkenasi and Herman Krebbers, among others and she holds degrees from the Amsterdam Conservatory and Northern Illinois University.

She has won prizes at all Dutch national competitions, at various concerto competitions and at several international competitions, including the International Johannes Brahms Competition in Austria.

Cordula is married to Seattle Symphony contrabassoonist Mike Gamburg, and together they have a daughter, Mia.

Cristina Valdés, piano

Considered one of today's foremost interpreters of contemporary music, **Cristina Valdés** is known for presenting innovative concerts with repertoire ranging from Bach to Xenakis. She has performed across four continents and in venues such as Lincoln Center, Le Poisson Rouge, Miller Theatre, Jordan Hall, and the Kennedy Center. Ms. Valdés has appeared both as a soloist and chamber musician at festivals worldwide including New Music in Miami, the Foro Internacional de Musica Nueva in Mexico City, Brisbane Arts Festival, the Festival of Contemporary Music in El Salvador, Havana Contemporary Music Festival, and the Singapore Arts Festival.

An avid chamber musician and collaborator, Ms. Valdés has toured extensively with the Bang On a Can "All Stars", and has performed with the Seattle Chamber Players, the Mabou Mines Theater Company, the Parsons Dance Company, and Antares. She has also been a featured performer on both the Seattle Symphony's Chamber Series and [UNTITLED] concerts.

Cristina has appeared as concerto soloist with the Johns Hopkins Symphony Orchestra, the Binghamton Philharmonic, the Seattle Philharmonic, Philharmonia Northwest, the Eastman BroadBand, and the Stony Brook Symphony Orchestra. Most recently, she performed the piano solo part of the Ives 4th Symphony with the Seattle Symphony.

Cristina Valdés joined the faculty of the UW School of Music in Fall 2014 as an artist in residence in the keyboard program.