

PROGRAM

- PASSACAGLIA ON AN OLD ENGLISH TUNE* (1941)
..... REBECCA CLARKE (1886-1979)
- LOOP* for Viola Solo (1991) GYÖRGY LIGETI (1923-2006)
- ELEGIE*, Op. 30 HENRI VIEUXTEMPS (1820-1881)
- ÉPISODE SIXIÈME* for viola solo (1984) BETSY JOLAS (b. 1926)
- ELLE S'ENFUIT* (2008)* ANDREW WAGGONER (b. 1960)

-INTERMISSION-

- FLEXIBLE PARTS* (2008)* ANNA WEESNER (b. 1965)
- I. *Small Piece of the Story*
II. *Proximity*
III. *Local Dance* – IV. *Elements* – V. *Air*
VI. *Viola Song* – VII. *Further Small Piece of the Story*
- SLUMBER SONG* J. S. BACH (1685-1750)
from *Schlummert Ein*, Cantata No. 82 (arr. by W. Primrose)
- WILD PURPLE* (1998) JOAN TOWER (b. 1938)
- CONCERT PIECE* GEORGES ENESCU (1881-1955)

* World Premiere
Performer's Note

I'm pleased to welcome composers Andrew Waggoner and Anna Weesner for tonight's concert. I've known Andy and Anna since the summer of 1999, when we were all in residence at the Summitt Institute in Park City, Utah. The program involved pairing a young composer with a young string quartet to collaborate on a new work and, hopefully to form an enduring musical friendship.

My ensemble, the Corigliano Quartet, worked with Andy, and we immediately hit it off, both musically and personally. Anna was also at the workshop, and while I didn't get to work with her that summer, I was taken with her music and her personality and we've all been friends since then. The composers that summer were mentored by Joan Tower, and tonight I'm happy to present works by all three of these fine composers.

Next summer, I will record my third solo CD featuring music from tonight's concert. The CD will include the world premiere recordings of the new pieces by Andrew Waggoner and Anna Weesner. For this project, I will be working with Shunpike as a Partner Artist.

—Melia Watras

Program Notes by Melia Watras (except where noted)

REBECCA CLARKE: *PASSACAGLIA ON AN OLD ENGLISH TUNE*

Born and raised in England, Rebecca Clarke spent much of her adulthood in the United States and claimed both English and American nationality. She attended the Royal College of Music, where she studied with Lionel Tertis, one of the greatest violists of his generation. Later, when selected to play in the Queen's Hall Orchestra, Clarke became one of the first female professional orchestral musicians. Clarke moved to the United States in 1916 to perform and in 1919 first gained notoriety as a composer when she entered a competition sponsored by patron of the arts Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, tying for first prize with Ernest Bloch. The *Passacaglia on an Old English Tune* was written in 1941 and premiered by Clarke herself. The theme is attributed to 16th century English composer Thomas Tallis.

GYÖRGY LIGETI: *LOOP* for Viola Solo (1991)

One of the most important composers of the 20th century, György Ligeti produced much of his early works amidst turmoil of war –torn Europe. Born into a Hungarian-Jewish family, he survived the Holocaust but lost his father and brother in it. Ligeti did not write for the viola until late in his life. Having previously written two string quartets, *Loop* is his first foray into writing for solo viola. He wrote the piece in 1991 for Viennese music publisher Alfred Schlee's 90th birthday, and later decided to use *Loop* as the second movement for a sonata for solo viola, written in 1994. Garth Knox, who gave the premiere of the piece, wrote that Ligeti “kept telling me to listen to records by Stephane Grapelli (the

great jazz violinist), particularly for the second movement, *Loop*, which he calls a ‘jazz dance’.”

HENRI VIEUXTEMPS: *ELEGIE*

One of the great violin virtuosos of the 19th century, Henri Vieuxtemps was also an accomplished composer. While most of his compositional output is for the violin (seven violin concertos, a violin sonata, and numerous short pieces for the violin), Vieuxtemps also played the viola and composed a number of beautiful, highly-regarded works for the that instrument as well. The *Élégie* for viola and piano, written in 1854, is one of Vieuxtemps’ earliest pieces for viola and shows off the composer’s knowledge of the instrument’s deep, rich timbre.

BETSY JOLAS: *ÉPISODE SIXIÈME*

Betsy Jolas was born in France to American parents in 1926. She moved to New York City with her family at the outbreak of World War II and attended high school and college in the states before returning to France in 1946 to attend the Paris Conservatoire, where she studied with Darius Milhaud and Olivier Messiaen. Jolas was appointed to the faculty of the Paris Conservatoire in 1975. In her compositions, Jolas shows herself to be a master of color. Her series of *Épisodes* for unaccompanied instruments (which includes *Épisode Sixième*) are an exploration of the possibilities of color in a single instrument.

ANDREW WAGGONER: *ELLE S’ENFUIT*

Elle s’enfuit (*She Flees*) was composed in the spring of 2008 for Melia Watras, who had asked for something showy, wild, over the top. The title is both a joke (Melia never flees from anything, much less a piece like this) and an attempt to get down to the roots of fugue: the word, of course, means “flight”, with lots of ancillary connotations, most of them culturally formed, like “hunt”, and “chase”; at the same time, early fugues grew out of the genre known as *ricercare*, or “research”, or just “search”. Early composers of fugue will clearly looking for something, whether animal, vegetable or metaphysical. Add to all this the psychotic state known as *fugue* (the *fleeing* from oneself) and the word becomes a veritable Rohrschach test. *Elle s’enfuit* is for me, in some way or another, reflective of all the above. The title is in French only to distance most of us from our immediate associations with fugue as a genre (in France perhaps we’ll just call it *She Flees*). The piece is a double-fugue in which both subjects are themselves polyphonic, acting more as blocks of sound than as distinct melodic motives. There’s a debt to Lutoslawski here, and his masterful *Preludes and Fugues*; he created a world of sinewy, shifting energies, of plaintive voices. I wanted *Elle s’enfuit* to be more a matter of irresistible force, of something pushing, desperately, to get somewhere, *anywhere*.

—Andrew Waggoner

ANNA WEESNER: *FLEXIBLE PARTS*

Flexible Parts is a set of seven short movements made in part from what I would describe as rather simple, perhaps plain, ordinary, unassuming, singable tunes. There are also a couple of harmonic progressions that would probably warrant use of the same adjectives. These tunes are flexible; they each can and do make guest appearances in several of the seven movements, even though each movement has a different musical character, a different emotional tenor. It might be interesting to note that these tunes often seem to appear to me more or less intact as part of my compositional process. Composing the whole context—the movements in which these tunes will sound—is a much more challenging part of the process, and one that involves a lot more paper and several more inches of my eraser. A simple tune can resonate in ways that are straightforward and light as well as in ways that are complicated and dark, and perhaps this piece is a way of trying to acknowledge that paradox. This piece involves some fairly high contrast, taking a few sudden and dramatic turns. This contrast may be most readily apparent in the fact that the piano, large instrument that it is, is often used in a very minimal way, though with outbursts that acknowledge the full range and power of the instrument. I would like to thank the wonderful violist, Melia Watras, for the chance to compose this new piece and to work with her.

—Anna Weesner

J. S. BACH/PRIMROSE: *SLUMBER SONG* from *Schlummert Ein*, *Cantata No. 82*

Violist William Primrose was one of the greatest virtuosos of his generation, and like his string colleagues of the day, violinists Fritz Kreisler and Jascha Heifetz, transcribed numerous works for his own instrument. Primrose often reworked pieces from the vocal repertoire, using compositions by Schubert, Villa-Lobos, Wagner, and J. S. Bach (including the *Slumber Song* from the aria *Schlummert Ein* on tonight’s program). Below is the German text of *Schlummert Ein*, from Bach’s *Cantata No. 82*, along with an English translation:

Schlummert ein, ihr matten Augen, fallet sanft und selig zu.	Slumber now, my eyes so languid, fall asleep most peacefully.
Weit, ich bleibe nicht mehr hier, hab’ ich doch kein Theil an dir, das der Seele könnte taugen.	World, I will no longer stay, I share not your proud array, here my spirit is now anguished.
Hier muss ich das Elend bauen, aber dort, dort werd’ ich schauen süssen Frieden, stille Ruh’.	Here I find but earthly suffering, only there is heaven’s blessing, deepest peace eternally.

JOAN TOWER: *WILD PURPLE*

Wild Purple was written for the violist Paul Neubauer, who premiered the work at Merkin Concert Hall (New York City) in September of 1998.

I always thought of the viola sound as being the color purple. Its deep resonant and luscious timbre seems to embody all kinds of hues of purple. I never

thought of the viola as being particularly wild. So I decided to try and see if I could create a piece that had wild energy in it and meet the challenge of creating a virtuosic piece for solo viola.

—Joan Tower

GEORGE ENESCU: *CONCERT PIECE*

A Romanian known as one of the finest violinists of his generation, George Enescu was also a composer, best known for his *Romanian Rhapsodies* for orchestra. *Concert Piece* is his only composition for viola and was written as a competition piece for the Paris Conservatoire in 1906. Although Enescu is well known for his use of Romanian themes in his work, the *Concert Piece* is more French in style. Enescu had a great understanding of the piano and the viola (he played both instruments) and his writing shows a flowing, rhapsodic lyricism.

Biographies

MELIA WATRAS

Described as “staggeringly virtuosic” by *The Strad*, violist Melia Watras has been hailed by audiences and critics alike for her electrifying and vibrant performances. She has long been at the forefront of the American new music scene, both as a soloist and co-founder of the award winning Corigliano Quartet (www.coriglianoquartet.com). Throughout her career Watras has championed the works of living composers. In the last ten years she has had 8 solo viola pieces written for her and has co-commissioned 10 new works for the Corigliano Quartet. As a soloist and chamber musician, she has performed 30 world premieres while making a dozen world premiere recordings. Watras has performed in Carnegie Hall, Weill Recital Hall, Alice Tully Hall and the Kennedy Center and at festivals such as Aspen and Ravinia. As the violist of the Corigliano Quartet, she has received awards such as the Grand Prize at the Fischhoff Competition and the ASCAP/CMA Award for Adventurous Programming.

Watras has recorded two solo CDs, *Prestidigitation* (to be released in October 2008) and *Viola Solo* (2004), earning high praise from the media. *Strings* remarked, “Watras is a young player in possession of stunning virtuosic talent and deserving of the growing acclaim.” *The Strad* called her “excellent” and “authoritative,” while the *American Record Guide* proclaimed, “Watras is a terrific violist.” For *Viola Solo*, Watras adapted John Corigliano’s *Fancy on a Bach Air* for viola. Her edition of this work is published by G. Schirmer, Inc. Watras’s solo recordings are with Fleur de Son Classics (www.fleurdeson.com). With the Corigliano Quartet, she has recorded for Naxos, Albany, Bayer, CRI, Riax, and Aguava and has appeared on NPR’s *All Things Considered* and *Performance Today* and WFMT-Chicago’s *Live from Studio One*. The quartet’s most recent CD was named 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 an assistant to the Juilliard String Quartet while at the Juilliard School. In 2004 she was appointed Assistant Professor of Viola at the University of Washington School of Music, where she teaches viola and chamber music. For more information on Melia Watras, please visit www.meliawatras.com.

KIMBERLY RUSS

Seattle Symphony Orchestra Pianist, Kimberly Russ, is recognized as an extremely accomplished ensemble player and collaborative pianist. Ms. Russ has performed with musicians of the nation’s finest orchestras as well as many other world-renowned artists. Continually in demand as a collaborative pianist, she appears frequently in concert throughout the Puget Sound region in recitals, festivals, and master classes. Ms. Russ can also be heard on several television, radio, and film recordings as well as video game soundtracks.

After moving to Seattle from New York, where she studied at the Juilliard School, Ms. Russ has appeared with the Seattle Opera Orchestra, the Bellevue Philharmonic, the Seattle Choral Company, and Choral Arts Northwest. She has been invited to perform for the Ladies Musical Club, the Belle Arte, Barry and Friends, and the Sherman Clay Music for Lunch Series. Ms. Russ is the rehearsal pianist for both the Seattle Choral Company and the Seattle Symphony Chorale, Seattle’s premiere orchestral choirs.

At the Seattle Symphony, Ms. Russ particularly enjoys assisting the conductors and soloists in preparation of their performances with the Orchestra. She also collaborates with many members of the orchestra in various chamber music concerts. While performing with the orchestra, Ms. Russ plays a variety of keyboard instruments including piano, celesta, harpsichord, synthesizer, and occasionally, organ.

Ms. Russ is a member of the Music Teachers National Association, Washington State Music Teachers Association, Seattle Music Teachers Association and maintains a select private teaching studio at her Shoreline home where she resides with her husband, Christopher Olka, (Principal Tuba, Seattle Symphony) son, James, and their cat, Berlioz.

ANDREW WAGGONER

Andrew Waggoner was born in 1960 in New Orleans. He grew up there and in Minneapolis and Atlanta, and studied at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, the Eastman School of Music and Cornell University. He has received grants and prizes from ASCAP, Yaddo, The New York State Council on the Arts, Meet the Composer, New Music Delaware, the Eastman School of Music and Syracuse University.

He has also been awarded the Lee Ettelson Composer’s Award from Composers Inc., in San Francisco, has been nominated for two prizes from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and was awarded a Guggenheim Fel-

lowship for 2005. In 2007 he was awarded the Roger Sessions Prize for an American composer by the Liguria Study Center in Bogliasco, Italy, and was in residence at Bogliasco in the spring of 2008.

His music has been commissioned and performed by the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Denver Symphony, the Syracuse Symphony, the Winnipeg Symphony, the Academy of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, the Cassatt, Corigliano, Miro, and Degas Quartets, the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, the California EAR Unit, pianist Gloria Cheng, violist Melia Watras, 'cellist Robert Burkhart, flutist Mario Caroli, the Bohuslav Martinu Philharmonic of Zlin, Czech Republic, Sequitur, the Empyrean Ensemble, Buglisi-Foreman Dance, the Athabasca Trio, CELLO, Flexible Music, Ensemble Nordlys, of Denmark, and Ensemble Accroche Note, of France.

He has two CD's on CRI, both now available on the New World label, and can also be heard on the Vienna Modern Masters Music From Six Continents series. In addition to his concert pieces, Waggoner has also composed extensively for theatre and for film, and is an active violinist. He was a founding Director of the Seal Bay Festival of American Chamber Music in Vinalhaven, Maine, and is currently Composer-in-Residence at the Setnor School of Music of Syracuse University, teaching regularly also at NOCCA Riverfront in New Orleans and at the Conservatoire de Strasbourg, France. With his wife, the 'cellist Caroline Stinson, he has recently formed Open End, giving concerts over the past three seasons in New York, Syracuse, Strasbourg and Florence.

ANNA WEESNER

Anna Weesner has been commissioned and performed by Dawn Upshaw, Richard Goode, Gilbert Kalish, Judith Kellock, Scott Kluksdahl, the Cassatt Quartet, the Cypress Quartet, Mary Nessinger, Jeanne Golan, Music at the Anthology, Network for New Music, the American Composers Orchestra, the St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble, Ensemble X and Metamorphosen. Awards include a 2007 Academy Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the 2006 Award for Excellence in the Arts from the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, a 2003 Pew Fellowship, ASCAP's young composer award and the Lakond Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She has been in residence at the MacDowell Colony, Blue Mountain Center, Fondation Royaumont in France, the Virginia Center, and was a visiting artist at the American Academy in Rome. Current projects include a new dramatic work for Sequitur, a new piano trio for the group Open End and a new work for viola and piano to be premiered by violist Melia Watras. Born in 1965, she grew up in New Hampshire and studied at Yale and Cornell. She lives in Philadelphia, where she has taught at the University of Pennsylvania since 1997.

Presents a Faculty Recital:

Melia Watras, *viola*

SHORT STORIES

With Guest Artist

Kimberly Russ, *piano*

7:30 PM

October 28, 2008

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