

PROGRAM

- SONATA* for viola and piano (1979)..... GEORGE ROCHBERG
Allegro moderato (1918-2005)
Adagio lamentoso
Allegro moderato; ma un poco parlando
- CAPRICE FOUR (GEORGE)* ATAR ARAD
for viola solo (2003) (b. 1945)

INTERMISSION

- from *FOLK SONGS* (1964)
BLACK IS THE COLOR..... LUCIANO BERIO
for mezzo-soprano, viola and harp (1925-2003)
- PERFECT STORM* for viola solo (2010)* SHULAMIT RAN
*World premiere (b. 1949)
- NATURALE (SU MELODIE SICILIANE)*..... LUCIANO BERIO
for solo viola, percussion and recorded voice (1985)

Tonight's program consists of contemporary works for viola and the pieces that inspired their creation. I wanted to build a concert around pieces of music that were not only engaging to perform and listen to, but also provided a creative spark for other composers.

I have long been inspired by ATAR ARAD, my former viola teacher at Indiana University. A brilliant violist and teacher, he is also a wonderful composer. In 2003, Atar wrote a set of six solo viola caprices, each having, more or less, a hidden quote from a well-known viola piece, using the composer's first name as the title. The *GEORGE* in the title of his fourth caprice, is George Rochberg. In addition to quoting the Rochberg Sonata for Viola and Piano, Atar also includes a musical reference to George by setting the caprice, with the exception of the opening phrase, entirely on the G string of the viola. In another connection between the pieces on tonight's program, one of Atar's most inspired "creations" is featured later in the concert. His daughter, Galia Arad, is the singer in *BLACK IS THE COLOR*.

Early in his career, GEORGE ROCHBERG wrote in the serialist style that was prevalent after World War II. The tragic death of his son to a brain tumor in 1964 left the composer struggling to compose. Rochberg made a dramatic change in his compositional style because he felt he could not express his profound grief and loss through serialism. His later works, which include the Sonata for Viola and Piano, mix tonality and atonality in a style sometimes labeled as neo-romanticism.

It was important to me to commission a composer to write a new work for this event. I have been a long-time admirer of the amazing works of SHULAMIT RAN. I approached her with the idea of writing a new piece influenced by an existing work, and to my delight, she accepted and chose Berio's *BLACK IS THE COLOR* from *FOLK SONGS* as a source of inspiration. Tonight is the world premiere of her new work for solo viola, *PERFECT STORM*. Her lovely program notes are below. I am tremendously grateful to Shulamit for writing this piece for me, and have been unbelievably excited to have the chance to work with her. It was Shulamit's choice of Berio that led me to *FOLK SONGS*, and then to *NATURALE*.

LUCIANO BERIO often drew inspiration from folk music. He explained this inclination for folk music in an interview from 1985. "My links with folk music are often of an emotional character. When I work with that music I am always caught by the thrill of discovery... I return again and again to folk music because I try to establish contact between that and my own ideas about music. I have a utopian dream, though I know it cannot be realized: I would like to create a unity between folk

music and our music – a real, perceptible, understandable conduit between ancient, popular music-making which is so close to everyday work and music.”

Berio’s *BLACK IS THE COLOR*, which starts the second half of the program, comes from his 1964 *FOLK SONGS*, in which the composer uses American, Armenian, Azerbaijani and Italian folk songs in a song cycle for mezzo-soprano and a small chamber group. *BLACK IS THE COLOR* was first recorded by Kentucky folk singer and composer John Jacob Niles. It originally had a traditional folk melody, but because his father thought it was “downright terrible,” Niles said, “I wrote myself a new tune, ending it in a nice modal manner.” Berio chose Niles’s version to reinvent for *FOLK SONGS*.

Berio furthered his work in *FOLK SONGS* with his 1984 viola concerto *Voci*, which Berio himself subtitled *Folk Songs II*. The composer would one year later use the same Sicilian melodies from *Voci* in writing *NATU-RALE*, for viola, percussion and recorded voice.

I’d like to thank the wonderful composers and performers on tonight’s program. It’s been a privilege to work with them. A big thank you to Josh Parmenter, Mike McCrea, and the technical crew from DXARTS for their electronics expertise. I would also like to acknowledge my gratitude for the generous support from the Donald E. Petersen Endowed Fellowship for funding the commission for Shulamit Ran’s *PERFECT STORM*.

—Melia Watras

PERFECT STORM for viola solo

When violist Melia Watras approached me about composing a solo viola piece for her, she presented an idea that added an intriguing extra dimension to this commissioning project. Her hope was to have me create a work that, in some way, alluded to, or made use of, an existing work of my choice from the viola repertoire, enabling both works to be performed side by side.

As I began reviewing, in my head, an imaginary strip of “famous viola licks” (harder to do than with violin or cello...), along with some favorite 19th century music I found myself returning time and again to the

central motif, played by viola, from the first song of Luciano Berio’s *FOLK SONGS* for singer and instruments. This gesture was playing in my mind also through another “filter”—an instrumental ensemble work composed in 1985 by my friend, the Israeli composer Betty Olivero, who was a student and protégé of Berio’s and who made recurring use of that particular fragment in her composition *PRESENZE*. My memory of her rendition, though quite faint now, seems to have helped etch that lovely little “viola moment” into my mind.

It is always an interesting experience, composing music that aims, from the start, in a pre-determined direction—in this case the Berio motif—yet also aspires to have its own life, quite independently from the source of the quotation.

In the resulting solo viola work I composed for Melia, *PERFECT STORM*, the Berio motif serves as a focal point that, once established, is used as a “return” moment and the point of departure for extended new elaborations. The architectural sweep of the piece may suggest to some a “ritornello” form. In addition to the lyricism and sweetness of the opening materials—mine and Berio’s—the landscape covered in the piece includes stretches of music that are intense, dance-like, ferocious, and for a while even suggesting, to its composer at least, “fiddle” playing style.

At the end, I believe that the borrowed materials, the “found object”, is thoroughly integrated into my composition, spawning music not readily suggested by the original point of inspiration, yet obviously enabled by that miraculous alchemy that is part of the process of creating music.

—Shulamit Ran

BIOGRAPHIES

SHULAMIT RAN, a native of Israel, began setting Hebrew poetry to music at the age of seven. By nine she was studying composition and piano with some of Israel’s most noted musicians, including composers Alexander Boskovich and Paul Ben-Haim, and within a few years she was having her works performed by professional musicians and orchestras. As the recipient of scholarships from both the Mannes College of Music in New York and the America Israel Cultural Foundation, Ran continued her composition studies in the United States with Norman Dello-Joio. In 1973 she joined the faculty of University of Chicago, where she is now the Andrew MacLeish Distinguished Service Professor

in the Department of Music. She lists her late colleague and friend Ralph Shapey, with whom she also studied in 1977, as an important mentor.

Winner of the 1991 Pulitzer Prize in composition, she has been awarded most major honors given to composers in the U.S., including first prize in the Kennedy Center-Friedheim Awards competition for orchestral music, two Guggenheim Foundation fellowships, grants and commissions from the N.E.A., the Koussevitzky Foundation at the Library of Congress, and many more.

Her music has been played by major orchestras, including the Chicago Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Israel Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic, and the American Composers Orchestra. Maestros Daniel Barenboim, Pierre Boulez, Christoph Von Dohnanyi, Zubin Mehta, Yehudi Menuin, Gustavo Dudamel, and various others, have conducted her works.

Between 1990 and 1997 she was Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, having been appointed for that position by Maestro Daniel Barenboim. In 1994-1997 she also served as the fifth Brena and Lee Freeman Sr. Composer-in-Residence with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, culminating in the performance of her first opera, *BETWEEN TWO WORLDS (THE DYBBUK)*.

The recipient of five honorary doctorates, her works are published by Theodore Presser Company and by the Israeli Music Institute and recorded on more than a dozen different labels, including several all-Ran discs. For further information, please visit:

<http://www.presser.com/Composers/info.cfm?Name=SHULAMITRAN>, as well as <http://music.uchicago.edu/people/faculty/ran.shtml>

Described as “staggeringly virtuosic” by The Strad, violist MELIA WATRAS (www.meliawatras.com) 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: commissioning, premiering and recording numerous new works for the solo viola and for string quartet, while appearing in the nation’s leading venues including Carnegie Hall, Weill Recital Hall, Alice Tully Hall and the Kennedy Center.

Watras’ expanding discography has garnered considerable attention and praise from the media. Of her debut solo CD, *VIOLA SOLO*, Strings remarked, “Watras is a young player in possession of stunning virtuosic

talent and deserving of the growing acclaim,” while The Strad called her “excellent” and “authoritative.” For the CD, Watras adapted John Corigliano’s *FANCY ON A BACH AIR* for viola. Her edition of this work is published by G. Schirmer, Inc. Watras’ second solo CD, *PRESTIDIGI-TATION*, features world premiere recordings of five works written especially for her and was described by Strings as “astounding, and both challenging and addictive to listen to.” Her upcoming third disc will include short, stylistically diverse works from composers ranging from Henri Vieuxtemps to Gyorgy Ligeti.

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 Associate Professor of Viola, chair of the Strings Division, and a Donald E. Petersen Fellow at the University of Washington School of Music.

...Although Galia feels weird writing a bio in third person, she’s heard that it looks more professional. GALIA ARAD is a New York City based singer/songwriter whose classical musician parents and classical voice training steered her directly into the arms of rock ‘n’ roll. She is from Bloomington, Indiana, where she studied voice and theater at Indiana University. She plays in venues all over New York City, and has toured Ireland and Japan singing original music. Galia is the winner of Songwriter Hall of Fame's Abe Olman award and winner of The Great American Song competition, and with much noise, has also caught the attention of one of her music idols, Shane MacGowan (from The Pogues), who wrote the liner notes and performed on her new album *Ooh La Baby*, which features Elvis Costello's rhythm section, Marc Ribot, and many other musicians that she loves to brag about.

VALERIE MUZZOLINI GORDON is Principal Harp of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra, a position which she has held since the age of twenty-three. As soloist, she has performed with the Seattle Symphony, the Nice Philharmonic, and the Vancouver Symphony. Valerie has performed at prestigious festivals worldwide, including Tanglewood and Verbier, Switzerland. An active chamber musician and avid proponent of new music, she performs regularly with the Seattle Chamber Players, the Seattle Chamber Music Society, and Music of Remembrance. Born in Nice, France, Valerie began her musical education at the Nice Conservatory, from which she received top honors. She continued her studies at

the Curtis Institute with Marilyn Costello and Judy Loman, followed by graduate work at Yale University with Nancy Allen.

MATTHEW KOCMIEROSKI is principal percussionist with the Pacific Northwest Ballet Orchestra. He regularly performs with the Seattle Symphony, Seattle Opera, the Auburn Symphony, and is on the faculty of the Cornish College of the Arts. He served for ten years as artistic director and percussionist of the New Performance Group, and was a founding member of Taneko. He is currently a member of the Pacific Rims Percussion Quartet and makes regular appearances with the Seattle Chamber Players. Internationally he has appeared at the Bergen, Moscow Autumn, Moscow Cold Alternativa, St. Petersburg's Sound Waves, Kiev MusicFest and Warsaw Autumn festivals. He may be heard on many recordings of solo, chamber, and orchestral music as well as a wide variety of movie, television, and video game soundtracks.

Seattle Symphony Orchestra pianist KIMBERLY RUSS performs as a chamber musician and collaborative pianist with musicians of the nation's finest orchestras as well as many other world-renowned artists. She appears frequently in recitals, festivals, and master classes throughout the Pacific Northwest and beyond. Russ has soloed with the Central Florida Symphony Orchestra, Florida Symphony Orchestra, Tacoma Young Artist Orchestra, Sammamish Symphony, Port Angeles Symphony, Cascade Symphony, and the Seattle Philharmonic. An experienced recording artist, Russ can be heard on numerous television and film soundtracks. Ms. Russ is an alumnus of The Juilliard School.

CLASSICAL

KING FM 98.1
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presents a Faculty Recital:

Melia Watras, *viola*
Ispirare

with

Galia Arad, *vocalist*

Matthew Kocmierski, *percussion*

Valerie Muzzolini Gordon, *harp*

Joshua Parmenter, *electronics*

Kimberly Russ, *piano*

7:30 PM
October 25, 2010
MEANY THEATER