

PROGRAM

COLLINES PARMİ ÉTOILES (2003)..... ANDREW WAGGONER (b. 1960)

from SIGNS, GAMES AND MESSAGES (1961-2005)

..... GYÖRGY KURTÁG (b. 1926)

Jelek I/Signs I (1961, rev. 2005)

Jelek II/Signs II (1961, rev. 2005)

Hommage à John Cage – elakadó szavak/ Faltering words (1987, rev. 1991)

Virág -Zsigmondy Dénesnek...in memoriam Anneliese Nissen-Zsigmondy (1994, rev. 2005)

The Carezza Jig (1989, rev. 1991, 1994, 1997)

IMPROVISATION(MELIA WATRAS)

EMBELLIE (1981).....IANNIS XENAKIS (1922-2001)

INTERMISSION

TIMELAPSE/GESTURE (2011)* SHIH-WEI LO (b. 1985)

I. Time's Flow and Condensation

II. Looping Trajectory

III. Diffused Light

IV. Arcus Morphing

* World premiere

SONATA FOR VIOLA SOLO (1991-1994)..... GYÖRGY LIGETI (1923-2006)

Hora lungă (1994)

Loop (1991)

Facsar (1992)

Presto con sordino (1994)

Lamento (1994)

Chaconne chromatique (1994)

Presents a faculty recital:

Melia Watras

Viola, Circa 2000

7:30 PM
January 11, 2012
MEANY THEATER

VIOLA, CIRCA 2000 is an exploration of solo viola music written over the last fifty years. While the works featured this evening are relatively close in terms of date of composition, they are all highly personal and individual pieces. Even when using similar techniques, the composers use them in different ways. For example, many of tonight's composers venture outside of the standard set of pitches of the conventional 12-note scale. Xenakis and Lo use precise quarter-tones. Kurtág asks for the violist to bend pitches a quarter-tone or less, to generate more expressiveness. Ligeti uses microtones of three different types to emulate the notes of the natural scale (sixth-tones, quarter-tones, and a slight deviation of 14 cents for the third of the scale).

You may even hear microtones in the piece I will improvise (though neither you nor I will know that until the moment of performance!). I began improvising around 2005, and this process of spontaneous creation has had an increasingly strong influence on the way I approach and perform written out music.

The compositions on this program spring forth from a number of inspirations: other composers and musicians, literature, dreams, visual art, and in the case of Iannis Xenakis, mathematics and Greek modal scales. Xenakis was a pioneer in electronic music, and in the use of mathematical models in music, applying principles such as set theory, stochastic processes and game theory. Xenakis's exploration of modal scales early in his career, led to the development of his system of non-octave scales, which provide the building blocks of his distinctive harmonic language. *Embellie* certainly has a modal flavor to it, along with micro-tonality and glissandi, often found in Xenakis's works for strings. This piece juxtaposes extremely contrasting musical material in a very short span.

Hungarian György Kurtág's *Signs, Games and Messages* is a prime example of the composer's concise and highly expressive style. A collection of 24 pieces, written over a period of fifty years, many of these short works were revised on multiple occasions, in many different places, and are often reminisces and homages to artists and friends of the composer. Generally, the work is performed as it is tonight: as a smaller grouping of pieces, rather than the entire collection. Tonight's selections include an homage to John Cage (particularly appropriate in 2012, the 100th anniversary of Cage's birth), and a memorial to Anneliese Nissen-Zsigmondy, pianist and wife of Hungarian violinist Dénes Zsigmondy ("Virág - Zsigmondy Dénesnek," from the title means "flower for Dénes Zsigmondy").

Notes on the remaining pieces, written by the composers themselves, are below.

--MELIA WATRAS

ANDREW WAGGONER: COLLINES PARMİ ÉTOILES...

COLLINES PARMİ ÉTOILES... (HILLS AMONG STARS...) was composed in 2003 for violist Melia Watras. It sprang from one concise dream-image, or rather dream-sequence: "a solitary figure addresses the hills and the hills respond." What exactly this means should be a matter of individual experience for each player, but the makings of this scenario were with me in composing this piece: a starry

sky, the lone questioner, the hills reaching into the vault of the sky, the old questions, the deep silence, and then: a response; from where, who knows? There is simply a feeling by the end of the piece that a boundary has been crossed, something has opened, and the relationship to "out there" has changed. The title is mine, and came with the initial fantasy; I liked the sound of it, its rhythm and internal rhyme. While there is no quotation in the work, its generative image must owe something to Ives (both the *Unanswered Question* and the second string quartet). The reference was cryptomnesiac on my part, but affectionate nonetheless.

--ANDREW WAGGONER

SHIH-WEI LO: TIMELAPSE/GESTURE

In this piece for amplified viola solo, I try to experience the idea of "conceptual compound." *TIMELAPSE* represents the whole structure, and *GESTURE* illustrates the unique behavior or feature in every single piece. The inspiration of the first one, *Time's Flow and Condensation*, comes from reading the short story *20 Sculptures in One Hour* by Lydia Davis; our perception of time and its relativity is challenged by the author's description.

The behavior of *Looping Trajectory* is based on the Automaton in *Mechatronic Art*: each phrase follows the similar path to pursue the goal, but the trace is slightly changed.

Diffused Light tries to capture the moment of diffused light's motion.

Self-replication is the spirit and essence of *Arcus Morphing*: through the transformation of the arc melody chain, the sound is brought to another status.

Timelapse/Gesture is dedicated to violist Melia Watras for her 2012 concert *Viola, Circa 2000* at Meany Theater, University of Washington.

--SHIH-WEI LO

Born in Pingtung, Taiwan, SHIH-WEI LO is currently working on his Master's Degree in Music Composition at the University of Washington, studying with Juan Pampin. His study at the UW also involves the research of electronic music and collaboration of interdisciplinary arts at the Center for Digital Arts and Experimental Media (DXARTS). He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Music Composition and Theory from National Taiwan Normal University, under the instruction of Ching-Wen Chao.

GYÖRGY LIGETI: SONATA FOR VIOLA SOLO

In 1990 I heard Tabea Zimmermann play the viola in a WDR concert in Cologne; her particularly vigorous and pithy—and yet always tender—C-string was the starting point for my fantasies of a viola sonata. With the plan of a sonata to be written later already in my head, I wrote the short viola piece *Loop* (now the second movement of the sonata) in 1991 as a birthday present for Alfred Schlee, the excellent publisher. In 1993 I wrote *Facsar* (now the third movement) in remembrance of my dear composition teacher Sándor Veress who died in Bern and who was an unjustly neglected composer—his music must be

performed again! It was also in 1993 that Klaus Klein enquired about a first performance in Gütersloh and Tabea Zimmermann agreed to play the complete sonata. The movements 1, 4, 5 and 6 are therefore new; I dedicated the two outer movements to Tabea Zimmermann, the fourth movement to Klaus Klein and the fifth to Louise Duchesneau, my colleague of many years.

1st movement *Hora lungă*: It evokes the spirit of Romanian folk music which, together with Hungarian folk music and that of the Gypsies, made a strong impression on me during my childhood. However I do not write folklore or use folkloristic quotations, it is rather allusions that are made. *Hora lungă* literally means “slow dance” but in the Romanian tradition this is not a dance but are sung folk melodies (in the northernmost province of the country, Maramures, in the centre of the Carpathian mountains), nostalgic and melancholy, richly ornamented. There is a striking similarity to the “Cante jondo” in Andalusia and also folk music in Rajasthan. Whether this has something to do with the Gypsy migration or is a common, old indo-european, diatonic melodic tradition is hard to decide. This movement is played exclusively on the C-string and in it I make use of natural intervals (pure major third, pure minor seventh and also the 11th harmonic).

2nd movement *Loop*: The title refers to the form; the same melodic figures are repeated, continually varied rhythmically and played progressively faster in tempo. Double-stoppings are played throughout with one of the notes always being an open string. The performer is therefore compelled to carry out daring position changes which in the fast section of the movement creates a “dangerous virtuosity.” In addition this movement must also be played in the spirit of jazz: elegant and “relaxed.”

3rd movement *Facsar*: The title is a Hungarian verb meaning “to wrestle” or “to distort.” In Hungarian this word is also associated with the bitter sensation felt in the nose when one is about to cry. It is also a double-stopping movement, a type of measured dance with displaced twisted modulations: pseudo-tonal.

4th movement *Presto con sordino*: From a regular perpetuum mobile movement (just as in my harpsichord work *Continuum*) through polyrhythmic accentuation and the use of contrasting character of the individual strings, partially concealed, illusionistic melodic fragments are gradually peeled away: more or less in the spirit of Maurice Ravel.

5th movement *Lamento*: Strict two-part writing mainly consisting of parallel seconds and sevenths. Indirect influence of various ethnic cultures; similar two-part writing in seconds is found in the Balkan area (Bulgaria, Macedonia, Istria), the Ivory Coast and Melanesia (on the island of Manus).

6th movement *Chaconne chromatique*: Allusions to the famous Bach chaconne should not be expected! My sonata is much more unassuming, does not historicize and also cannot support monumental forms. I use the word chaconne in its original meaning: as a wild exuberant dance in strongly accentuated three-four time with an ostinato bass-line.

--GYÖRGY LIGETI (translated by Lindsay Gerbracht),
from the preface to the Sonata for Viola Solo

Described as “staggeringly virtuosic” by The Strad, violist MELIA WATRAS (meliawatras.com) has distinguished herself as one of her instrument’s leading voices: as a soloist, recording artist, and co-founder of the acclaimed Corigliano Quartet. An accomplished and adventurous performer, Watras has championed the works of living composers throughout her career. She has commissioned, premiered and recorded numerous new compositions, while appearing onstage at prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall, Weill Recital Hall, and Alice Tully Hall. Highlights of the 2011-12 season include the New York City premiere of Pulitzer Prize-winner Shulamit Ran’s *Perfect Storm* (a solo viola piece that was written for and given the world premiere by Watras), and the release of *Short Stories*, Watras’s third solo CD.

Watras’s 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’s second solo CD, *Prestidigitation*, 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.” 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 Naxos label CD was named one of the Ten Best Classical Recordings of the Year by The New Yorker. The group’s numerous awards include the Grand Prize at the Fischhoff Competition and the ASCAP/CMA Award for Adventurous Programming.

A versatile performer, Watras has enjoyed collaborations with dance and theater. She has appeared as violist/dancer at the Merce Cunningham Studio in New York City, served as music consultant at the Seattle Repertory Theatre, and had music from her *Viola Solo* CD featured in a production at Intiman Theatre.

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 Strings, and a Donald E. Petersen Endowed Fellow at the University of Washington School of Music.