

SONO
LUMINUS
SL|Editions

ispirare

**MELIA
WATRAS**

	<i>George Rochberg</i>		
	Sonata (1979)		
	for viola and piano		
1	I. Allegro moderato	8:51	
2	II. Adagio lamentoso	5:42	
3	III. Fantasia: Epilogue	2:49	
	<i>Atar Arad</i>		
4	Caprice Four (George) (2003)	4:05	
	for viola solo		
	<i>Luciano Berio</i>		
5	Black is the color... (1964)	2:57	
	for mezzo-soprano, viola and harp from Folk Songs		
	<i>Shulamit Ran</i>		
6	Perfect Storm (2010)	10:22	
	for viola solo (<i>world premiere recording</i>)		
	<i>Luciano Berio</i>		
7	Naturale (su melodie siciliane) (1985)	20:02	
	for solo viola, percussion and recorded voice		
	Total time:	54:53	

“She is first and foremost, an artist.”

—Strings

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

Atar Arad, my viola professor when I was a student at Indiana University, is a wonderful composer, in addition to being a brilliant violist and pedagogue. He has described his set of viola caprices as “thank you notes to composers who graced us with great viola pieces.”

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 on this recording, Atar’s daughter, the beautiful singer Galia Arad, is featured in *Black is the color...*

Early in his career, **George Rochberg** was one of America’s leading proponents of serialism, but began to change course in the mid-1960s. The tragic death of his son contributed to this period of artistic change, and Rochberg broke from pure serialism in an effort to find a more personal expression through music. His later works, which include the Sonata for viola and piano, re-embrace tonality in a style sometimes labeled as Neo-Romanticism.

I have been a long-time admirer of the amazing music of **Shulamit Ran**. I approached her with the idea of writing a new work influenced by an existing composition, and to my delight, she accepted. Her lovely program notes are below. Shulamit’s choice to pair her piece with Berio’s *Black is the color...* from *Folk Songs*, led me to *Naturale*.

Luciano Berio reinvents American, Armenian, Azerbaijani and Italian folk tunes in his 1964 song cycle, *Folk Songs*, for mezzo-soprano and a small chamber group. *Black is the color...*, the opening of this collection, has traditional lyrics with a melody written by Kentucky folk singer and composer John Jacob Niles.

Further inspired by folk songs, in 1984 Berio completed his viola

concerto *Voci*, which the composer himself subtitled *Folk Songs II*. He would one year later use the same Sicilian melodies from *Voci* in writing *Naturale*, for viola, percussion and recorded voice.

I am tremendously grateful to all of my incredible collaborators and feel privileged to have worked with them all!

This CD would not have been possible without support provided by the Donald E. Petersen Endowed Fellowship and the Gerberding Endowment Fund at the University of Washington.

Perfect Storm, by Shulamit Ran, was commissioned by Melia Watras, with funding from the Donald E. Petersen Endowed Fellowship at the University of Washington.

—Melia Watras

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



Melia Watras

Hailed by *Gramophone* as “an artist of commanding and poetic personality” and described as “staggeringly virtuosic” by *The Strad*, violinist Melia Watras has distinguished herself as one of her instrument’s leading voices. A soloist, chamber musician, recording artist and composer, Watras has commissioned, premiered and recorded numerous new compositions, while appearing at venues such as Carnegie Hall, Weill Recital Hall, and Alice Tully Hall.

Ispirare is her fourth solo CD, adding to an expanding discography that also includes 14 chamber music recordings. *Strings* called her solo work “astounding and both challenging and addictive to listen to,” while *Corigliano: Music for String Quartet*, performed by the Corigliano Quartet (which she co-founded), was named one of the Ten Best Classical CDs of the Year by *The New Yorker*. Watras is currently Associate Professor of Viola and chair of Strings at the University of Washington School of Music, where she was awarded the Donald E. Petersen Endowed Fellowship and the Royalty Research Fund.

Winston Choi

Laureate of the 2003 Honens International Piano Competition and winner of France's 2002 Concours International de Piano 20e siècle d'Orléans, Canadian pianist Winston Choi has performed in recital and with orchestra across 4 continents. Choi's debut CD, the complete piano works of Elliott Carter (l'Empreinte Digitale in France) was given 5 stars by *BBC Music Magazine*. He has also recorded 2 CDs of the piano music of Jacques Lenot for the Intrada label, having won the Grand Prix du Disque from l'Académie Charles Cros for Volume I. He can also be heard on the Albany, Arktos, Naxos, QuadroFrame and Southport Records labels. Choi is Associate Professor and Head of Piano at Roosevelt University's Chicago College of Performing Arts.

Galia Arad

Singer/songwriter Galia Arad has appeared at London's Royal Albert Hall and has toured the USA, England, Ireland and Japan, singing original music. The winner of Songwriter Hall of Fame's Abe Olman award and winner of The Great American Song competition, she has collaborated with Shane MacGowan (from The Pogues), Elvis Costello's rhythm section, Marc Ribot, and many others.

Valerie Muzzolini Gordon

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. 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.

Matthew Kocmierski

Matthew Kocmierski is principal percussionist with the Pacific Northwest Ballet Orchestra. He regularly performs with the Seattle Symphony and Seattle Opera, and is on the faculty of Cornish College of the Arts. He is currently a member of the Pacific Rims Percussion Quartet, makes regular appearances with the Seattle Chamber Players, and can be heard on many recordings of solo, chamber, and orchestral music as well as movie and television soundtracks.

“Staggeringly virtuosic.”
—The Strad



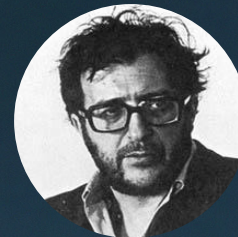
Atar Arad

Atar Arad (b. 1945) is an internationally renowned viola soloist, chamber musician, composer and educator. A First Prize-winner at the Geneva International Music Competition (1972), he has performed worldwide as a soloist with major orchestras and as a member of the famed Cleveland Quartet. Arad's compositions include Sonata for Viola Solo, String Quartet, Twelve Caprices for Viola, Viola Concerto (which he premiered in Bloomington, Brussels and Stockholm), and *Tikvah* for viola solo, commissioned for the Munich International Viola Competition. His concerto, string quartet and viola sonata are recorded on RIAX. He recently presented his viola caprices on a European tour including concerts in London, Berlin, Frankfurt, Detmold and Hamburg. Arad currently serves as Professor of Music (viola) at the Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University.



Luciano Berio

Luciano Berio (1925-2003) is one of the great figures in 20th century music. His innovative works include orchestral pieces, electronic experiments, his famous *Sequenzas* for solo instruments, operas and chamber works. His compositions moved music forward through his creative inventiveness and experimentation with many musical styles. Berio was a pioneer in electronic music, using advanced digital processing in his explorations of the human voice, solo instruments and larger ensembles. Berio held numerous prestigious appointments as a teacher, including Juilliard, Harvard, Darmstadt and Cologne, and served as president and artistic director of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, a post he held until his death.



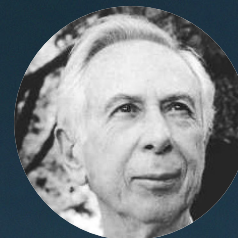
Shulamit Ran

Shulamit Ran (b. 1949), a native of Israel, is a Pulitzer Prize-winning composer whose music has been played by leading performing organizations including the Chicago Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Israel Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, and various others. Her chamber, solo and vocal works are regularly performed by leading ensembles around the world. Ran has been awarded most major honors given to composers in the U.S., including two fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, grants and commissions from the Koussevitzky Foundation at the Library of Congress, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Fromm Music Foundation, Chamber Music America, the American Academy and Institute for Arts and Letters, first prize in the Kennedy Center-Friedheim Awards competition for orchestral music, and many more.



George Rochberg

George Rochberg (1918-2005) began his career as one of the foremost American serialist composers. During the 1960s, he rejected serialism, embracing a modern version of tonality, which contributed to the changing climate in American music. Rochberg was educated at Mannes College and the Curtis Institute. He was the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships, including a Fullbright Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Naumburg Award for Composition, and the Kennedy Center-Friedheim Award, and had works premiered and performed by artists such as Isaac Stern, George Szell, Sir George Solti, Lorin Maazel and many others. Rochberg held teaching posts at Curtis and the University of Pennsylvania, where he taught until retiring in 1983.





Melia Watras
Ispirare
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Credits

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Melia Watras, viola
Winston Choi, piano
Galia Arad, voice
Valerie Muzzolini Gordon, harp
Matthew Kocmierski, percussion