

'DREAMS' FOR VIOLA AND PIANO

by Rachel Matthews

AWARD-WINNING WORK A PLEASURE TO PLAY

Seattle-based pianist and composer Rachel Matthews scores big with her "Dreams" for viola and piano (aka "Viola Dreams"). She penned the work in 2008 and dedicated it to the renowned British violist Helen Callus. Just two short years later, the work made a bit of history when it was selected as a winner of the first biennial Maurice Gardner Composition Competition (sponsored by the American Viola Society). "Dreams" celebrated joint premières in 2010 by Callus in Seattle, Washington, and by Scott Slapin at the International Viola Congress in Cincinnati, Ohio. Callus also edited the viola parts of Matthews' text, lending much of her sound and technique to the rich-sounding score.

Violists will breathe a sigh of relief as they open the pages to Matthews' score. There's something here for everyone – from soaring, fast-paced runs to languid, melodic lines. The first movement of "Dreams" opens with a quiet beckon from the piano to which the viola answers with a gentle flush of notes and then moves eloquently into a dancing, syncopated song. The following second movement is a faster-paced exploration of dissonance and percussive tonalities. And the final movement, with its slow melancholic *mesto*, is lush and showcases an exceptionally lovely solo viola section.

"Dreams" for viola and piano isn't just a treat to the ears, it is a treat to play. Violists will be thankful for this accessible, beautiful and soaring homage to the deep and complex viola sound.

Matthews presents violists a chance to really explore their instrument's sound, roam the scale, and flex some serious-sounding melodic muscle.

Heather K. Scott

Strings Magazine, November 2011