

Pianist **REIKO UCHIDA** enjoys an active career as a soloist and chamber musician. She performs regularly throughout the United States, Asia, and Europe, in venues including Suntory Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, Alice Tully Hall, the 92nd Street Y, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Kennedy Center, and the White House. First prize winner of the Joanna Hodges Piano Competition and Zinetti International Competition, she has appeared as a soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Santa Fe Symphony, Greenwich Symphony, and the Princeton Symphony, among others. She made her New York solo debut in 2001 at Weill Hall under the auspices of the Abby Whiteside Foundation. As a chamber musician she has performed at the Marlboro, Santa Fe, Tanglewood, and Spoleto Music Festivals; as guest artist with Camera Lucida, American Chamber Players, and the Borromeo, Talich, Daedalus, St. Lawrence, and Tokyo String Quartets; and in recital with Jennifer Koh, Thomas Meglitoranza, Anne Akiko Meyers, Sharon Robinson, and Jaime Laredo. Her recording with Jennifer Koh, “String Poetic” was nominated for a Grammy Award. She is a past member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center Two. As a youngster, she performed on Johnny Carson’s Tonight Show. Ms. Uchida holds a Bachelor’s degree from the Curtis Institute of Music, a Master’s degree from the Mannes College of Music, and an Artist Diploma from the Juilliard School. She studied with Claude Frank, Leon Fleisher, Edward Aldwell, Margo Garrett, and Sophia Rosoff. She has taught at the Brevard Music Center, and is currently an associate faculty member at Columbia University.

Violinist **JEFF THAYER** is currently the concertmaster of the San Diego Symphony. Previous positions include assistant concertmaster of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, associate concertmaster of the North Carolina Symphony, concertmaster and faculty member of the Music Academy of the West (Santa Barbara), and concertmaster of the Canton (OH) Symphony Orchestra. He is a graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Eastman School of Music, and the Juilliard School’s Pre-College Division. His teachers include William Preucil, Donald Weilerstein, Zvi Zeitlin, Dorothy DeLay, and James Lyon. He has appeared as soloist with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the San Diego Symphony, the Jupiter Symphony, the North Carolina Symphony, the Canton Symphony Orchestra, the Pierre Monteux School Festival Orchestra, the Spartanburg Philharmonic, the Cleveland Institute of Music Symphony Orchestra, The Music Academy of the West Festival Orchestra, the Williamsport Symphony Orchestra, the Nittany Valley Symphony Orchestra, and the Conservatory Orchestra of Cordoba, among others. He attended Keshet Eilon (Israel), Ernen Musikdorf (Switzerland), Music Academy of the West, Aspen, New York String Orchestra Seminar, the Quartet Program, and as the 1992 Pennsylvania Governor Scholar, Interlochen Arts Camp. Through a generous loan from Irwin and Joan Jacobs and the Jacobs’ Family Trust, Mr. Thayer plays on the 1708 “Sir Bagshawe” Stradivarius.

San Diego Symphony Orchestra Associate Concertmaster **WESLEY PRECOURT** has appeared as a soloist with numerous orchestras around North America and is an avid recitalist, recording artist and new music collaborator. He has been presented by the Musical Merit Foundation, First United Methodist Churches of San Diego and Escondido and the La Jolla Athenaeum’s series. He was a featured performer at the dedication ceremony of the Heifetz Studio at The Colburn Conservatory where he also collaborated with Paul Neubauer, Ida Levin, Ronald Leonard and Richard Beene. He has performed and recorded with pop artists including Christina Aguilera, Justin Timberlake, No Doubt, Taylor Swift, Robbie Williams, Rod Stewart and many others. Mr. Precourt has won awards at international competitions, including the Spotlight Awards of Los Angeles, the NFAA ARTS Awards and the Kingsville International Competitions, among others. Wesley is a graduate of the Thornton School of Music at USC and the Colburn Conservatory.

Taiwanese-American violist **CHE-YEN CHEN** has established himself as an active performer. He is a founding member of the Formosa Quartet, recipient of the First-Prize and Amadeus Prize winner of the 10th London International String Quartet Competition. Since winning First-Prize in the 2003 Primrose Competition and “President Prize” in the Lionel Tertis Competition, Chen has been described by San Diego Union Tribune as an artist whose “most impressive aspect of his playing was his ability to find not just the subtle emotion, but the humanity hidden in the music.” Having served as the principal violist of the San Diego Symphony for eight seasons, he is the principal violist of the Mainly Mozart Festival Orchestra, and has appeared as guest principal violist with Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and Canada’s National Arts Centre Orchestra. A former member of Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society Two and participant of the Marlboro Music Festival, he is also a member of Camera Lucida, and The Myriad Trio. Chen is currently on faculty at USC Thornton School of Music, and has given master-classes in major conservatories and universities across North America and Asia. In August 2013, the Formosa Quartet inaugurated their annual Formosa Chamber Music Festival in Hualien, Taiwan. Modeled after American summer festivals such as Ravinia, Taos, Marlboro, and Kneisel Hall, FCMF is the product of long-held aspirations and years of planning. It represents one of the quartet’s more important missions: to bring high-level chamber music training to talented young musicians; to champion Taiwanese and Chinese music; and to bring first-rate chamber music to Taiwanese audiences.

Cellist **CHARLES CURTIS** has been Professor of Music at UCSD since Fall 2000. Previously he was Principal Cello of the Symphony Orchestra of the North German Radio in Hamburg, a faculty member at Princeton, the cellist of the Ridge String Quartet, and a sought-after chamber musician and soloist in the classical repertoire. A student of Harvey Shapiro and Leonard Rose at Juilliard, on graduation Curtis received the Piatigorsky Prize of the New York Cello Society. He has appeared as soloist with the San Francisco, National and Baltimore Symphonies, the Symphony Orchestra of Berlin, the NDR Symphony, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the BBC Scottish Symphony, the Janacek Philharmonic, as well as orchestras in Italy, Brazil and Chile. He is internationally recognized as a leading performer of unique solo works created expressly for him by composers such as La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela, Éliane Radigue, Alvin Lucier, Christian Wolff, Alison Knowles and Tashi Wada. Time Out New York called his recent New York performances “the stuff of contemporary music legend,” and the New York Times noted that Curtis’ “playing unflinchingly combined lucidity and poise... lyricism and intensity.” Recent seasons have included solo concerts at New York’s Issue Project Room and Roulette, the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, the Sub Tropics Festival in Miami, the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, the Angelica Festival in Bologna as well as solo performances in Brussels, Metz, Paris, Mexico City, and Athens. Last summer Curtis led four performances of the music of La Monte Young at the Dia Art Foundation’s Dia:Chelsea space in New York.



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chamber music concerts at UC San Diego

April 17, 2017 – 7:30 p.m.

Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Sonata for Viola and Piano in B-flat major, Opus 107  
Moderato  
Vivace  
Adagio  
Allegretto con grazia

Max Reger  
(1873-1916)

Piano Trio  
Moderato  
TSIAJ (Presto)  
Moderato con moto; Coda: Adagio cantabile

Charles Ives  
(1874-1954)

*intermission*

String Quartet in E-flat major, Opus 74 “The Harp”  
Poco adagio - Allegro  
Adagio ma non troppo  
Presto  
Allegretto con Variazioni

Ludwig van Beethoven  
(1770-1827)

Reiko Uchida, piano  
Jeff Thayer and Wesley Precourt, violins  
Che-Yen Chen, viola  
Charles Curtis, violoncello

## Max Reger, Sonata for Viola and Piano in B-flat major, Opus 107

The letters of Reger's name form a palindrome, and we still don't quite know what to make of his music. His status in music history is that of a puzzle. Does he figure as a final unravelling of nineteenth-century Romanticism into haunted, unintelligible muttering (to be grouped with Pfitzner and Zemlinsky), or does he bridge the centuries and point forward with his strained chromaticism toward the break-throughs of Schoenberg and his circle? This question need not be answered, nor even posed. Better to listen to the music, history be damned.

The Sonata in question was composed in 1908-09, originally for clarinet and piano. The appeal of the clarinet to late-career composers is part of the mythology of classical music - Mozart, Brahms, Reger, Feldman. The hallowed, eerily disembodied, at times ghostly sound of that instrument brings with it evocations of valediction and the nearness of death. When, as is often the case, the music is transferred to viola, a healthier, ruddier complexion greets us.

Reger was professor of composition at the Conservatory in Leipzig, and his penchant for a flexible, mobile harmonic syntax is best reflected in the text he published in 1903, *Beiträge zur Modulationslehre*, or, On the Theory of Modulation. This modest book forms a catalog of examples, from the simplest to the most arcane, of how to shift from one tonal key to another - a kind of handbook for costume-changes or shifts in personality. "I consider him a genius," Arnold Schoenberg wrote of Reger, but we are not sure if this statement expresses affection, a genuine affinity for the music, or just an acknowledgment of Reger's achievement. Over 1000 compositions flowed from Reger's pen. In keeping with his fondness for fluid shifts in sounds and their attendant meanings, Reger was considered a master of the *Schüttelreim*, a type of profane verse in which consonants of words are swapped to yield new meanings, similar to what in the Anglophone world is called a Spoonerism.

Reger himself described Opus 107 as "a very light and friendly piece, not long at all, so that the character of the sound of the wind instrument does not tire." We know that the sound of Che-Yen Chen's viola will not tire, and that we will not tire of hearing it.

## Charles Ives, Piano Trio

"There is a great Man living in this Country - a composer. He has solved the problem of how to preserve one's self-esteem and to learn. He responds to negligence by contempt. He is not forced to accept praise or blame. His name is Ives."

These words of Arnold Schoenberg carry more conviction than his "classification" of Reger as a genius. But they also reflect upon Schoenberg as much as on Ives: Schoenberg would have honored contempt above almost any other public quality, Ives, on the other hand, probably less so. And Schoenberg's words do not address the music of Ives. The music would have been harder for Schoenberg to address, standing, as it does, entirely outside his own musical concerns and formal preoccupations. The New England insurance executive as composer seems a

peculiarly American phenomenon, prompting comparison with Wallace Stevens, poet and likewise insurance executive, and T. S. Eliot, poet and banker.

Gustav Mahler, shortly before his death, may have discovered Ives during his tenure in New York, stumbling across a score to the Third Symphony in a music store. And indeed, there are certain kinships between these two great and iconoclastic symphonists: off stage musicians, medleys of defamiliarized folk tunes, mimicry of nature, strivings for the universal. But if anything, Ives went further than Mahler ever could have, or could even have foreseen. A music such as the finale to the Fourth Symphony, with its hetero-rhythms, multiple conductors, de-tuned pianos, microtonal violin parts and relentless, utterly awe-inspiring advance across an almost incomprehensible expanse of sound and time, may in fact be the apotheosis of the Mahlerian idea. Or it might be something otherwise unknown in music.

Mrs. Ives (whose first name was, of all things, Harmony) wrote about the Piano Trio: "... the Trio was, in a general way, a kind of reflection or impression of his college days on the Campus now 50 years ago. The 1st movement recalled a rather short but serious talk, to those on the Yale fence, by an old professor of Philosophy - the second, the games and antics by the Students on the Campus, on a Holiday afternoon, and some of the tunes and songs of those days were partly suggested in this movement, sometimes in a rough way. The last movement was partly a remembrance of a Sunday service on the campus - Dwight Hall - which ended near the 'Rock of Ages.' It was composed mostly in 1904 but fully completed in 1911. Mr. Ives doesn't think it was ever played in a public concert... He isn't quite sure of the TSIAJ over the 2nd movement - he thinks it hardly anything but a poor joke..."

TSIAJ stands for: This Scherzo Is A Joke.

## Beethoven, Quartet in E-flat major, Opus 74, "The Harp"

In his early career Beethoven tended to present his works in sets. Following the Opus 18 string quartets (six in number) and the three of Opus 59, we come upon Opus 74, surprisingly the first string quartet of Beethoven to be assigned its own opus number. The year is 1809, and Opus 74 is the tenth of his sixteen string quartets. Camera Lucida over the last several years has presented a Beethoven string quartet every season, working in long-term retrograde from the final quartet, Opus 135 - "the last shall be the first" - successively backwards through the late quartets including last season's Opus 95: in this manner we hope to cover all of Beethoven's string quartets in our lifetimes. Next year we may spread all three of the Opus 59 quartets across one season, and then we shall end at the beginning, with Opus 18 - "*ma fin et mon commencement*."

That Opus 74 is a stand-alone opus, and not a cycle or cluster of individual "opera," has some significance. Each of the remaining quartets likewise stands alone, and this demonstrates a fundamental shift in Beethoven's attitude toward what a work can be. Where in the early period Beethoven manages to extend musical discourse into a texture of ongoingness, even a kind of essential *matter* or *substance* (in Greek, *hyle*) which, once admitted to the space of performance,

seems to spread and linger like warmth or fluid mass (another chamber piece in E-flat, the String Trio Opus 3, would be the perfect example); the later works, from the middle period onward, take on the character of events, full of discrete gestures and actions, often aggressively argued and relentlessly calling attention to themselves and their particular needs. Consequently, they resemble battlefields or construction sites. They are framed and delimited, unambiguous in their specificity, their *thisness*. Opus 74 may be somewhere on the way there.

Or, as Charles Rosen sums up in his chapter on Beethoven in *The Classical Style*: "Since the Renaissance at least, the arts have been conceived as ways of exploring the universe, as complementary to the sciences. To a certain extent, they create their own fields of research; their universe is the language they have shaped, whose nature and limits they explore, and in exploring, transform. Beethoven is perhaps the first composer for whom this exploratory function of music took precedence over every other: pleasure, instruction, and, even, at times, expression."

Certainly pleasure will not be excluded from our listening experience of Opus 74. Who can resist the pleasure - both sensual and sensible - of recognizing the gentle "Harp"-like arpeggios in the development section of the first movement? Or the taut, coiled energy of the Presto movement, so exciting to Beethoven that it needed to be repeated again and then *again*, interrupted by the same Trio section, twice. The slow movement was called by an anonymous critic in 1811 *ein dunkles Nachtstück* - a dark piece of night, a nocturne. The work ends in a set of variations.

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