

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.

**ANNA SKÁLOVÁ** joined the San Diego Symphony Orchestra in the fall of 2012. She has appeared in several chamber music concerts in the San Diego area, including performances with Art of Élan, Camera Lucida and Luscious Noise. Before joining the SDSO, Ms. Skálová graduated with a Performer Diploma from Indiana University in 2012 under the tutelage of Jaime Laredo and with a bachelor’s degree from the University of Michigan in 2011, where she studied with Stephen Shipps. Upon graduation from the University of Michigan she was awarded the prestigious Augustus Stanley Award for distinguished work in music. Ms. Skálová has served as concertmaster of the University of Michigan Symphony Orchestra, Indiana University Orchestra and Michigan Philharmonic (with which she also appeared as a soloist). In 2007 she participated in the New York String Orchestra at Carnegie Hall as the assistant concertmaster, and in 2010 she returned as concertmaster. Ms. Skálová has earned the Grand Prize in the Michigan American String Teachers Association Competition and First Prize at the ASTA Competition. She was a winner of the concerto competitions of the Marquette Symphony Orchestra (Michigan) and the University of Michigan. She appeared as a soloist with the University of Sao Paulo Symphony Orchestra (Brazil) and in the Eighth Emirates International Peace Music Festival in Dubai. She has performed recitals in the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, France, Poland, the United States and Singapore.

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 unfailingly 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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Upcoming Camera Lucida performances:  
 April 17, 2017  
 May 15, 2017

# *camera lucida*

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chamber music concerts at UC San Diego  
 February 20, 2017 – 7:30 p.m.  
 Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Fantasy Pieces, Opus 73 for Cello and Piano

Robert Schumann

Tender and with feeling  
 Lively, light  
 Fast and fiery

String Quartet in B-flat major KV 589  
 “King of Prussia”

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Allegro  
 Larghetto  
 Menuetto: Moderato  
 Allegro assai

*intermission*

Quintet for Piano and Strings in A minor, Opus 84

Edward Elgar

Moderato; Allegro  
 Adagio  
 Andante; Allegro

Reiko Uchida, piano  
 Jeff Thayer and Anna Skalova, violins  
 Che-Yen Chen, viola  
 Charles Curtis, cello

The three Fantasy Pieces, Opus 73, were first composed for clarinet and piano. But the ever-pragmatic Schumann allowed for the substitution of the clarinet by viola or cello. One hint that the version for cello might have gotten the upper hand in Schumann's imagination: the much-later Cello Concerto, Opus 129, quotes a passage from the second of the Fantasy Pieces almost verbatim. In some sense the exact instrumentation cannot in fact be considered binding: these pieces are song-like in so many ways that any instrument must consider itself a stand-in for the voice. Even phrase lengths seem to match the pacing and duration of breaths; and formally the pieces strike one as more schematically strophic than the meandering forms of the character piece.

As he was wont to do, Schumann committed these three movements to manuscript with astonishing speed: not more than two days in 1849 were required for the initial draft. "Night Pieces" might have been the intended title; and in the second and third pieces we can easily imagine the antic and whimsical poses of a Pierrot Lunaire. Nocturnal too might be the particular texture of the piano writing, blurred and dappled in pale shadows, at times notated in rhythms that don't allow the two hands of the pianist, much less the two instrumentalists, to synchronize definitively. In the final piece a haunted middle section interrupts the bravura proceedings with chilling a-minor melodies, accompanied by dissonant piano triplets that dangle over the strong beats and the bar lines.

The first movement, marked *Zart und mit Ausdruck*, sets a tone of longing and disquiet. The theme, a descending half-step and a rising diminished fifth, sits uncomfortably in a space of unallayed restlessness. The ending of the second movement, *Nach und nach ruhiger*, repeats a series of echoes, softer and softer, hypnotized or hypnotizing. Finally Schumann launches us out of this uncanny netherworld with a final movement that is more manic than triumphal; the ebullience, the *Schwärmerei*, is too good to be true.

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The moniker "Prussian Quartets," or "King of Prussia Quartets," refers to Friedrich Wilhelm II of Prussia, nephew of Frederick the Great, and his successor as King. History has not been kind to this fun-loving monarch, a libertine and a hedonist in radical contrast to his disciplined predecessor. But he is said to have been a very talented cellist. It is clear that Mozart intended to dedicate these three quartets to the King, hoping for a rich commission; and that his idea was to write prominent cello passages which would place the King in a favorable musical light should he deign to play them at court. Recent research seems to suggest that there was in fact no such dedication, and no acknowledgement of the quartets on the part of the King has been established.

The first two movements of KV 589 were composed as Mozart was on his way home from Berlin and Leipzig, in late Spring 1789, where he had attempted to present himself at court. But the rest of the piece was only composed in the middle of 1790, when Mozart was back in Vienna. The focus on flattering the King with elaborate cello soli seems to have faded away by the time he resumed his work. As Alan Tyson has quipped, "It is as if, not more than two or three weeks after he had left Potsdam, the royal A string was still sounding vividly in [Mozart's] inner ear, but after some months in Vienna it could be heard only faintly."

By placing the cello parts in a higher register than usual, the conventional texture of the string quartet is transformed. Mozart, in his chamber music, always tended toward an opulence in the middle parts, lending his music a complexity and density at odds with the late classicism of his time. Mozart himself preferred to play viola in chamber music outings, and the expressive weight of the inner voices is one of the great miracles of his late chamber music. The cello elevated to the descant range adds yet another medium-high voice, and takes away the grounding bass notes. The homogeneous, "rooted" hierarchy of timbres and registers gives way to an ensemble of soloists, active by turns, functioning in a quasi-concertante style. It is a texture that seems to feature a shifting sequence of close-ups: often, when one instrument takes its soloistic turn, the others almost stop, standing back admiringly.

We think of Mozart as one who composed effortlessly. But in a letter to his Masonic brother and supporter Puchberg, he spoke of the "Prussian" quartets as "this laborious work." Amazingly, we can in fact hear this labor, and its tortuous eloquence. Mozart tends to begin in disarmingly simple form, using themes that seem uncomplicated, blithe, ingratiating. But we are gradually drawn in to labyrinthine passages, serpentine of scalar chains that confound the listener both rhythmically (we lose track of the strong beats) and in their chromatic twists and turns. The Menuetto movement is longer and more substantial than expected; this dance is usually a sort of respite in the four-movement sonata structure. But here it seems a miniature composition in its own right, with a Trio section even longer than the Menuetto proper. Utterly confusing is one cadence which wants to resolve in D-flat major, but, after a general pause, lands in g minor. The Larghetto is one of those rare evocations of timelessness to which Mozart had privileged access; few composers since have captured such perfect calm with such simple means. The 6/8 Finale hearkens back to the gently lilting mood of the Finale of the great Divertimento in E-flat, KV 563.

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Music lovers associate Edward Elgar (1857-1934) with a handful of hugely popular works for symphony orchestra - *The Dream of Gerontius*, the "Enigma" Variations, the Violin and Cello Concertos, the Pomp and Circumstance marches. We don't think of Elgar in connection with chamber music. But there can be a special thrill in re-encountering a figure like Elgar from an unfamiliar angle. It's too easy to take him for granted; we "know" what his music sounds like. The valedictory melancholy. The brilliant orchestral effects, the massing of forces, the lush colors. The Edwardian grandeur. Listening to his Piano Quintet might catch us unawares; it might be like seeing an old friend in a completely unexpected location and context - we might do a double take.

As a matter of fact, chamber music took an important place in Elgar's life. He played violin and piano from youth, and his third instrument was the bassoon, with which he joined his brother Frank, an oboist, in a family-and-friends wind quintet. These "Brothers Wind," as they called themselves, met on Sunday afternoons and provided Elgar with a sort of laboratory for his composing and arranging endeavors, including wind arrangements of favorite pieces by Mozart, Beethoven and Haydn. The son of a piano tuner and keeper of a music shop, Elgar learned his immense craft not from famous teachers or conservatory programs, but from direct personal experience and the day-to-day practice of music, whether

amongst professionals or amateurs.

Still, there is not a lot of chamber music in Elgar's list of works. Late in life, toward the end of the First World War, Elgar experienced a period of failing health and moved with his family to the countryside. As he recovered, he devoted himself to three ambitious chamber works: the Violin Sonata, the String Quartet in e minor, and the Piano Quintet, working on all three almost simultaneously. All three works are expansive in scope, incredibly finely-wrought in detail, and replete with audible evidence of a labor both loving and exacting.

Elgar and his wife seem to have developed a fascination with a group of withered trees near to their country home. Lady Elgar referred to the trees as "sad dispossessed trees" or "sinister trees"; one they called the Octopus Beech Tree, others were the roosts of owls. Their friend the novelist Algernon Blackwell may have suggested an association between the trees and a local legend involving a community of Spanish monks who were struck dead while "celebrating impious rites." The trees were meant to be the frozen remains of the heretics' writhing bodies. At the same time Elgar was eagerly reading the occult novels of Bulwer Lytton, one of which deals with "witchcraft and alchemy in an English village." The "sinister trees" seem to have inspired the weirdness of the Quintet's first movement, and the legend of the Spanish monks even prompted Elgar to incorporate a hazy Spanish dance into the movement at several points.

Indeed, the panoply of musical referents in this music would be difficult to catalog. We hear the German lineage of Schumann, late Brahms and Richard Strauss (the last a vocal fan of Elgar's music), as well as the roiling pianism of Liszt; we hear the bleak expanses of Sibelius and the shimmering harmonies of Ravel; we hear liturgy-like motto themes and can-cans, all of this worked into a sort of grand musical pageant. Yet the great thrust of the music still never quite obscures Elgar's modesty. At times awkwardly, at times poignantly, Elgar's enthusiasm and sincerity carry the work. "To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life." The words of Elgar's contemporary, the art historian Walter Pater, could stand as epigraph to this Quintet.

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