

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 Meglioranza, 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.

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.

Camera Lucida takes great pleasure in thanking all our supporters for their generous support, in particular pH Projects, Carol, Lanna, Eloise, Mary and Michael, David, Julia, Evelyn, Marion, Pauline, Harry, Georgiana, Irene, Amnon, Geoff, Donald, Laurette, Stephan and Civia, Bob and Ginny, and Caroline.

Upcoming Camera Lucida performances:

November 6, 2017
 December 4, 2017
 January 29, 2018
 April 2, 2018
 April 30, 2018

camera lucida

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chamber music concerts at UC San Diego

October 2, 2017 – 7:30 p.m.

Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Piano Trio in G major, K. 496

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Allegro
 Andante
 Allegretto

Piano Trio in B-flat major, K. 502

Allegro
 Larghetto
 Allegretto

intermission

Sonata for Viola and Piano in E-flat major,
 Op. 102 No. 2

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Allegro amabile
 Allegro appassionato; Sostenuto; Tempo I
 Allegro con moto; Allegro; Piu tranquillo

Reiko Uchida, piano
 Jeff Thayer, violin
 Che-yen Chen, viola
 Charles Curtis, cello

Tonight we present two piano trios written only three months apart in the year 1786. Mozart was at the “zenith of his Viennese career” (Ernst Hertrich). This is the period between the premières of *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, both significant successes for Mozart; likewise, six extraordinary piano concerti, from K. 466 in d minor to K. 503 in C major, belong to the years 1785-86. But already by the end of 1786, Mozart’s popularity had begun to wane; his music was considered too complicated, too dense, and perhaps too serious for the entertainments of the day. The financial and personal trajectory had begun to point downward; this “zenith” did not last very long.

Piano Trios in the eighteenth century were written for the best amateurs, although the gap between amateur and professional at that time appears to have been very small. They were not serious pieces, like quartets, written chiefly for connoisseurs, and a display of compositional virtuosity would have been out of place: a fugue, for example, was possible in a string quartet, but unthinkable in a piano trio. The performers’ virtuosity, on the other hand, was very much in place.

-Charles Rosen, in *The Classical Style*

The designation “piano trio” did not exist in Mozart’s day; K. 502 is titled “Sonata,” and K. 496 “Terzette.” But the instrumentation was wildly popular. In the scores, the listing of instruments invariably places the piano at the top, “*con l’accompagnato d’un violino e violoncello.*” The centrality of the piano part points to a feature that made these works so popular: accomplished amateur pianists could achieve dazzling concerto-like effects, staged in the drawing rooms of their own upper middle class or aristocratic homes. It is not hard to listen to these trios as miniaturized piano concerti.

At the same time, K. 496 places us at the cusp of the new, Romantic, intricately intertwined and instrumentally balanced approach to the piano trio, as it was then taken over by Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms. For Haydn (and for Mozart in his first essay in piano trio form, the Divertimento K. 254) the trio was essentially a piece for piano in which the cello largely doubled the left hand of the pianist, and the violinist played in dialogue with the right. But from K. 496 onwards, the music is unmistakably for three instruments; detailed, individuated roles are cast, with specific gestures and timbral markers, and with a pliancy and ingenuity demonstrating intimate knowledge and love of each instrument. Just the treatment of register stamps the writing with genius: low and dusky in the violin, high and yearning in the cello, blending and reinforcing, or running against and colliding, and so on. Neither appendages to the piano’s texture, nor stand-ins for a larger orchestra, the string instruments are organs of subjectivity and volition, freedom and aspiration.

The limpid, calm outer surface of K. 496 gives an aura of time-standing-still, a state which comes back every so often in Mozart’s chamber music. Sonorities are sustained in a near-absence of motive (the word understood in both its senses), while this sustaining becomes the delicate mass to which elaborate ornamentation is appended. The wonder of this motionless music

has often been devalued; even Charles Rosen finds K. 496 “thin” in style and lacking in interest. But tonality need not always strive and advance; Mozart shares with us here something more interesting than interest.

K. 502, by contrast, seems on its way somewhere, aiming toward a destination, impatient. The opening Allegro is motivically daring, deriving nearly all material from its beginning; the “second theme” is simply the tiny flourish with which the violin comments on the piano’s opening, extended into its own phrase punctuated by thought-pauses; and the development begins with an unrelated, innocuous melody which loosely echoes the contour of the main theme. Its Larghetto is perhaps the most fully achieved of all the Trios’ slow movements, a proper *Arioso* movement sustaining a completely integrated lyricism with a minimum of means.

Hearing these two Trios played one after the other will be an undertaking. The flow of harmonies, the serpentine melodies, scales and appoggiaturas, the continuously imbricated cadences and modulations, the almost embarrassing flowering of musical invention, may overwhelm. But in all this florescence we may open ourselves to a strangeness and sweetness of detail that is intoxicating.

With the marking “Allegro amabile,” does Brahms mean amiable, pleasant, agreeable - or does he mean loving and lovable? From the music this term attempts to name, we can infer something like gentle, tender, affectionate. The theme is rhythmically simple enough, almost square; but its intervallic leaps are oddly obtuse, and, when the first *forte* arrives, downright craggy - thus, human, slightly awkward, not smoothed-over. With the second theme we are already at risk of losing our metrical bearings, as the instruments dovetail in a canonic off-set, suggesting more a measure of three than of four. In effect, we have lost track of the downbeat, and the music floats off the grid. Among the relatively few dynamic and expressive markings, the following are in the majority: *dolce, diminuendo, piano, piu piano, sotto voce, molto dolce, pianissimo...* The word *dolce* appears 18 times in the first movement alone.

This is music of the greatest concentration, in the sense that not a note is redundant. For all its sweetness and tenderness, here we find its urgency. The message must be conveyed with a minimum of fuss, and with total sincerity: a particular, quiet but unequivocal, language of love. After the saturation and repletion of the Mozart trios, Opus 120 may seem short, even abrupt. Its complexity is densely gathered, and set with remarkable economy. The second movement is a kind of Capriccio-like, tempestuous, darkly ringing scherzo in the unusual key of e-flat minor, yielding to a middle section in the key of B major. This key relationship involves a change of only one note, the B-flat of E-flat minor moving up a half step to the B-natural of B major; the other pertinent notes change their names, but not their pitch, as for example, E-flat into D-sharp. Such transformations are disorienting, and the music suggests a chorale or hymn of haunting fervor, a turning-inside

out of the minor sonority. With a simple downwards half-step in octaves from B-natural to B-flat, the stormy scherzo material returns, and after surging to one of the only *fortissimo* moments in the piece, the movement settles gently into its ending, *dolce diminuendo*.

Whereas the traditional variation form often proposes an elaboration and augmentation of the theme as the rationale for varying it, Brahms in this Finale gives us a theme that already elaborates upon itself in its first statement (something that Mozart does in the *Divertimento* K. 563); and then, in its first “variation,” strips the theme down to its merest outlines, single notes in each instrument, off-set in syncopation. Here Brahms may be as close to his contemporary Cézanne as he was to come - the sensuous markers merely hint at form, without actually filling it in. And what then follows is music of an Intermezzo character, spidery and feather-light; more than 50 bars of music in sequence pass with no other expressive markings than *molto piano, piano grazioso* and *pianissimo*. The sonata ends, surprisingly, with definitive *forte* chords, as if Brahms suddenly decided to break off from his musical reverie and put his pens away. He put them away almost for good; Opus 120 is his last work of chamber music, and one of his very last pieces at all. The Intermezzo of the nineteenth century too will shortly end, and music as Brahms knew it.

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