

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.

A native of Taiwan, **MANN-WEN LO** has been playing the violin since the age of five. She made her orchestral debut performing Mozart’s Violin Concerto No. 2 at age eleven at the National Concert Hall in Taipei. She has received numerous awards at various competitions and auditions such as Toyama Asian Youth Competition (Hong Kong), Taipei Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition (Taipei), and the International Chamber Music Ensemble Competition (New York). Mann-Wen has been featured on radio stations such as NPR’s From the Top and WGBH. She has collaborated in chamber music concerts with artists such as Glenn Dicterow, Ettore Causa, David Shifrin, Frank Morelli, William Purvis, and Hye-Sun Paik. Her chamber music mentors include members of the Tokyo, Borromeo, Juilliard and Takacs String Quartets. She has also studied chamber music with artists such as Peter Frankl, Daniel Phillips, Kim Kashkashian and Lucy Chapman. Mann-Wen’s festival appearances include the Gstaad String Academy at the Menuhin Festival, Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, Music Academy of the West, Franco-American Chamber Music Festival, Saito Kinen Festival Seiji Ozawa’s Young Musician Study Group, New York String Orchestra Seminar and Orford Arts Academy. Aside from classical music, Mann-Wen also performs jazz and various other genres with the Kaleidoscope Trio, an innovative group with the creative combination of guitar, clarinet and violin. Mann-Wen received her Bachelors degree from the New England Conservatory of Music and her Masters from the Yale School of Music. Her

principal teachers include Masuko Ushioda and Syoko Aki. She has recently earned her Graduate Certificate from USC Thornton School of Music, and is currently a Doctor of Musical Arts candidate under the tutelage of Glenn Dicterow. Mann-Wen plays on a 1925 Guiseppe Fiorini violin on generous loan from the Chi Mei Culture Foundation in Taiwan.

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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Upcoming Camera Lucida performance:
April 30, 2018

camera lucida

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Chamber Music Concerts at UC San Diego
Monday, April 2, 2018 – 7:30 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

String Quartet in e-minor, Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
Opus 59 Nr. 2 “Razumovsky”
Allegro
Molto adagio
Allegretto; Maggiore; da capo il Minore
Finale. Presto

intermission

Quartet for Piano and Strings Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
in A-major, Opus 26
Allegro non troppo
Poco Adagio
Scherzo: Poco Allegro
Finale: Allegro

Jeff Thayer and Mann-Wen Lo, violins
Che-Yen Chen, viola
Charles Curtis, violoncello
Reiko Uchida, piano

Beethoven, **String Quartet in e-minor, Opus 59 Nr. 2 “Razumovsky”**

Beethoven’s three Razumovsky quartets, composed in 1806, date from the early part of the composer’s middle period, and offer a vivid representation of the composer’s evolving, maximalist aesthetic. Following upon the heels of the “*Eroica*” Symphony, one hears in them a similar ambition to expand and heighten the genre by any and every means necessary. In the case of Opus 59, one of the key factors in the quartets’ composition was the ensemble they were written for: the private quartet of Count Andrei Razumovsky, then the Russian ambassador to Vienna, a skilled amateur violinist, and, most importantly, Beethoven’s patron. Razumovsky’s quartet consisted of top-tier musicians, each an accomplished soloist in his own right -- a far cry from the usually amateur performers of the quartets of Haydn and Mozart, for whom Op. 59 would almost certainly have been out of reach. In Op. 59 Nr. 2 Beethoven seems to be composing a symphony for four instruments: the epic scope of his musical ideas, intense dramatic tension, extreme density of form and texture, are without precedent. Beethoven’s demands on the technical virtuosity of the performers seem inseparable from the composerly demands placed on himself: throughout the quartet he seems to be toying with unstable motifs and juxtapositions of sharp, often jarring affective contrasts and disorienting (but precisely calculated) harmonic shifts. The opening of the first movement recalls the opening of the “*Appassionata*” sonata Opus 57, written earlier in the same year, with its upward shifting of a chord on the tonic by a semitone. This semitone, in conjunction with the ascending fifth in the first two chords, seems to form the basis of the entire work and its inspired dramatic arc. The development of the first movement begins with Beethoven re-stating the opening chords transposed up a semitone in e-flat minor (after ending in E-flat major), and then enharmonically reinterpreting the same chord as d-sharp minor, in order to move towards e-minor via b-minor. The climactic return to e-minor towards the end of the development is approached by the same kind of chordal motif with small shifts, this time in *pianissimo* syncopation against the cello, and cadencing explosively in C-major (the open C-string of the cello seems to play an important role in the music’s harmonic trajectory, appearing also in the shift from e-minor to F-major in the opening bars).

The Razumovsky quartets share, among other things, references to Russian folk music. In Op. 59 Nr. 2, a Russian folk song appears in the *Maggiore* section of the third movement, marked in the score as “*Thème Russe*.” Beethoven was likely given this melody by Razumovsky himself, but the composer treats it with an amusing lack of respect, treating it in the most “German” way possible: with increasingly elaborate counterpoint, as if it were a compositional exercise, completely subverting its nature. Beethoven seems to save his folksy side for the Finale, in which the first violin plays with pseudo-improvisatory embellishment. The conservation of motives throughout the four movements highlights the expressiveness of Beethoven’s inspired treatment of thematic material. Interestingly, despite their wildly different harmonic landscapes, both the third movement and the Finale prominently feature the flat second and the ascending fifth, the former in the shape of Neapolitan chords used to approach certain cadences, seeming

to allude to harmonic shifts from the first movement.

One of the more interesting unifying features of all three Opus 59 quartets seems to be a penchant for eccentric and audacious second movements. And yet, in the case of Opus 59 No. 2, the second movement seems to contain the essence of the work as a whole. Beethoven’s instruction, “*Si tratta questo pezzo con molto di sentimento*” (“This piece is to be played with great sentiment”), seems to echo an anecdote from Ferdinand Reiss, who, recalling a piano lesson with Beethoven, writes: “When I left out something in a passage, a note or a skip, which in many cases he wished to have specially emphasized, or struck a wrong key, he seldom said anything; yet when I was at fault with regard to the expression, the crescendo or matters of that kind, or in the character of the piece, he would grow angry. Mistakes of the other kind, he said were due to chance; but these last resulted from want of knowledge, feeling or attention. He himself often made mistakes of the first kind, even playing in public.” Beethoven’s explicit demand that the musicians play with sentiment is not superfluous, nor is it a generic directive to “be expressive”; the second movement contains music of the greatest profundity and emotional depth, even if obscured at times by its outward simplicity; and this music demands far more than mere technical mastery or elegance of style. Such music is difficult to discuss because of its extreme subjectivity: it seems to contain and reconcile so many of life’s apparent conflicts, marrying painful longing and insurmountable desire with a zen-like impersonality and unconditional acceptance. According to Czerny, the second movement’s main theme occurred to Beethoven “as he gazed at the firmament and thought about the music of the spheres.” If true, Beethoven’s awe and reverence towards the universe seem to have found expression in an homage to Bach, whose music he was likewise in awe of: the contours of the opening melodic figure resemble Bach’s famous ‘B-A-C-H’ cypher (in addition to retaining the same semitone featured in the first movement). And in contrast to the third movement, Beethoven’s use of imitative counterpoint here seems sincerely inspired by Bach’s musical language as a means of expressing the essential nature of the universe itself. This time there is no need for irony.

Brahms, **Piano Quartet No. 2 in A-major, Opus 26**

In his early period, before moving to Vienna, Brahms habitually worked in multiples or groupings of one musical medium or format. Thus we have the two String Sextets, the many sets of variations, the early Piano Sonatas (a form he never returned to), numerous choral works, and the two orchestral Serenades. We sense a desire to make a thorough study of a set of materials, to search out the potentialities of a given set of conditions (instrumental or formal), to exhaustively work through the resources laid out on the workbench, so to speak, before moving on to other forms. This impulse may point as much toward private study as toward production. With the two Piano Quartets Opp. 25 and 26 we have a pair of works that Brahms seems to have worked on in tandem, simultaneously, going from the one to the other, over a period of years (he worked slowly in the early period). We could think of an artist painting two enormous canvases at the same time,

perhaps as a diptych, but destined to be sent out into the world as individual works. The Piano Quartets were both completed in 1861; Brahms was 28 years of age.

These Quartets are sprawling in length, teeming with expressive and thematic detail, dedicated to a constant evolution and elaboration of material, a kind of repetition without ever exactly repeating. They seem utterly unconcerned with matters of concision, a listener’s attention span, or received wisdom regarding the necessary coherence of sonata form. At that, they are arguably the first two unequivocal successes in Brahms’ handling of large-scale sonata structure. They do cohere, but they do so by virtue of a concentration, a patience, a persistence, an inner state of creative self-assurance that takes as its necessary basis the scale and spaciousness that might allow their form to unfold of its own accord.

Oddly, the music does not strike one as monumental; it is too intimate, too personal; the Quartets are long in duration but they do not overwhelm the beholder, they are not demonstrations of power. The A-major in particular seems a series of genre tableaux, winsome and naïve and homely at times, meandering calmly, while at other times radically interiorized, withdrawn and anguished. The Quartet begins in an aspect of quiet contemplation, the piano’s hymn-like chords setting the background to a simple melodic excursion in the cello, self-absorbed, in no hurry to go anywhere in particular. Immediately the roles are reversed, the strings restate the chordal introit with a sound reminiscent of ancient consort music, and the piano gently embarks on one of those characteristically Brahmsian melodies that does not want to stop, extending bar for bar, phrase for phrase and modulation for modulation, longing for timelessness. When the recapitulation wraps its way around again, the piano’s hymn sounds an octave lower -- one of those almost imperceptible variations, a subtle touch to darken and ground the by-then familiar chords, a perfect example of Brahms constantly inflecting and personalizing the form. The touching *Poco adagio* sets up a lilting, pulsing rhythm of the utmost tenderness; fantasia-like diminished chord arpeggiations lead to stabbing outbursts of pathos, then subside again. The Scherzo is all innocence, sequences of circular melodies in unison, the high violin a sort of whistling overtone. The Trio section sets up a tidy canon, almost a game of tag; the atmosphere is one of idealized childlikeness, playfulness, a musical analog to genre depictions of cherubs and angels at play with flutes and lyres. The Finale draws on the vehemence of eastern European folk music, what was then called *Zigeunermusik*, gypsy music, music which fantasizes a state of unbounded pleasure and freedom from bourgeois constraints, an otherness both longed for and fraught with feelings of guilt and misgivings. Accented *appoggiaturas* lend a rebarbative, wrong-note raucousness to the texture; we seem to find ourselves in an imagined dance-hall where a dizzying potpourri of dances -- *verbunkos*, galop, can-can -- seem to alternate with only the merest of thematic threads linking them.

— Amir Moheimani and Charles Curtis