

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.

Violinist **WES 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 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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Chamber Music Concerts at UC San Diego
 Monday, October 1, 2018 – 7:30 p.m.
 Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Piano Trio in E-flat major, Hob XV:30

Joseph Haydn
 (1732-1809)

Allegro moderato
 Andante con moto
 Presto

Sonata in a minor “Arpeggione”
 for viola and piano

Franz Schubert
 (1797-1828)

Allegro moderato
 Adagio
 Allegretto

intermission

String Quartet in A major, Opus 18 No. 5

Ludwig van Beethoven
 (1770-1827)

Allegro
 Menuetto
 Andante cantabile
 Allegro

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

On Tonights Program

by Amir Moheimani

Beethoven's Opus 18 String Quartets form one of the centerpieces of Camera Lucida's eleventh season. The Opus 18 quartets were composed between 1798 and 1800, and constitute Beethoven's first foray into the genre regarded as the pinnacle of chamber music. The fact that Beethoven waited as long as he did to embark upon the epic saga that would become his sixteen string quartets suggests a certain measure of prudence, as well as a reflection of Beethoven's famous perfectionism. By the time he began work on Opus 18, Beethoven had already demonstrated a command of chamber music with his early string trios and piano trios, which feel like something of a preface or preparation for Opus 18. Thus Opus 18 represents not only Beethoven's embarkation on a transformative journey, but also his self-conscious stepping-forward into the company of the masters.

Opus 18 also encourages us as listeners to take a broader view of the historical evolution of chamber music as a whole, to observe and enjoy its unique qualities as a genre. Chamber music occupies a unique niche whose function is less about profit, prestige, the glorification of God, or social advancement, than it is simply a celebration and exploration of music itself, for music lovers, in an intimate setting. The turn from the 18th to the 19th century saw the rapid evolution of chamber music in the hands of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, but just as much in the hands of the lesser aristocracy and emerging bourgeoisie, who were its intended users, both as practicing musicians and as listeners, and, perhaps most tellingly, as both at the same time. Chamber music must be understood as a social act, as participation; not as spectacle.

This evening's program creates a set of contrasts and coincidences between three substantial works dating from this critical period in the history of chamber music. The Haydn piano trio functions as a point of reference with which to compare the Schubert "Arpeggione" sonata and Beethoven's Op. 18 No. 5 quartet. Whereas Beethoven builds upon Haydn's masterful use of small, simple motifs to generate a broad spectrum of musical material, Schubert seems to proceed in a less organic way, relying on inspiration and intuition. However, Beethoven's harmonic palette is significantly sparser than that of Haydn or Schubert, and this serves to accentuate transitions between sections, prioritizing a sense of structural and narrative drama. Schubert, on the other hand, seems to identify more with Haydn's charming wit and a certain poetic, vulnerable quality that is harder to find in Beethoven.

Haydn: Piano Trio in E-flat major, Hob XV:30

Haydn's piano trios offer unique way of tracking his development as a composer. He composed a total of 45 trios for piano, violin, and cello, an output dwarfing that of Beethoven and Mozart. They were composed in two distinct periods: the early trios (totaling 17) were composed mostly in the late 1760's when the composer was in his 30's; the late trios date from mid-1784 to 1797 and contain more than a few masterpieces.

Tonight's is the second in a set of two trios (both in E-flat major) dating to

1797. Like so many of the other late trios, it manages to be both intellectually fascinating and emotionally evocative. Logic and wit both seem to flow from the composer's masterful manipulation of musical structure, always aimed toward expressive ends. By creating and subverting expectations at both small and large time-scales, Haydn immerses the listener in a continuously engaging narrative of ideas. He does all this with an extreme motivic frugality: almost every theme in every movement can be derived from an ascending or descending scale (though often cleverly concealed in elaborate figuration).

Unlike Haydn's quartet writing, the trios rely on a very clear hierarchy of instruments, with the piano occupying the most important role, followed by the violin, and with the cello often either filling out the harmony or doubling the left hand of the pianist. Yet Haydn allows the instruments always to emerge with great sensitivity to their timbral characteristics: when the violin answers the piano, the affect changes, and when the cello enters the high tenor range, a special ardor is felt. The beautiful slow movement, a subtly shifting ceremonial march in triple time, puts these differences on poignant display.

There are moments, particularly toward the ends of the outer movements, when the pianist has extended, cadenza-like solo passages, invoking a kind of concerto-in-miniature. Throughout the three movements the piano seems to consistently take charge by being the first to introduce new ideas and steer the music into new directions. When, in the first episode of the finale, the music shifts suddenly and violently from E-flat major to E-flat minor, it is the piano that emphasizes the unexpected new harmony. However, unlike in concerto writing, or even in the string quartet, one does not have the sense that each instrument is acting as a kind of character in a play. Rather, they each seem to be serving the music itself as parts of a whole according to their own means, and when the character of the music changes, it seems to flow from within the innermost nature of the music, rather than from the willfulness of the performers.

Schubert: Sonata in a minor "Arpeggione" for viola and piano

The "Arpeggione" sonata is named after the instrument for which it was originally composed: the arpeggione, essentially a bowed guitar, held between the legs like a cello or viol. This short-lived instrument was invented in 1823. A friend of Schubert's who championed the arpeggione commissioned this work from him the following year, and sadly (or perhaps not), this sonata remains the instrument's only substantial composition. Despite the fact that the arpeggione was a fretted instrument, this sonata is now played on either the viola or cello, with each of those instruments lending its own particular expressive cast to the music. Like much of Schubert's music the piece remained unpublished until the latter half of the 19th century; due to the fact that the arpeggione had by then faded into obscurity, the first edition included both cello and viola arrangements.

From the outset of the first movement Schubert seems to be playfully showcasing the arpeggione's massive range with extreme leaps, extended runs, and registral shifts between adjacent sections. Schubert (as with Haydn) employs a brand of virtuosic writing that, through its playful, folksy, almost haughty demeanor,

suggests the influence of so-called gypsy music. And yet, the instrumental writing is incredibly delicate and lyrical, even by Schubert's standards, to the point that it takes on an unusually brittle and fragile quality, sometimes seeming to look backwards to the music of a time before Romanticism. But the uniquely understated melancholy of Schubert is present at every moment, the musical echo of a poetic sensibility quintessentially Romantic.

Beethoven: String Quartet in A major, Opus 18 No. 5

There are many conspicuous similarities between Beethoven's Opus 18 No. 5 and Mozart's Quartet K. 464 (also in A major). Many of Beethoven's early compositions betray the young composer's infatuation with Mozart. The obvious similarities to Mozart may, however, serve to disguise those elements of Beethoven's early work which foreshadow his personal development, and the pivot to a new aesthetic. The Mozartean elements of Opus 18 No. 5 which lie very much at the surface are constantly being undermined by a subtle but powerful undercurrent of pathos. Conflict arises in the first bar, when an ascending three-note motif is tossed back and forth between the cello and the first violin, who can't seem to agree whether this motif (the germ of not just the first movement but of the whole quartet) begins on an upbeat or a downbeat. This sets up a dramatic conflict that curiously foreshadows so many of Beethoven's epic middle and late period works. Interestingly, Beethoven in his quartets often seems to foreshadow himself in this way, perhaps feeling less constrained by the relative intimacy that chamber music offers relative to symphonic works.

The seemingly benign second movement likewise betrays Beethoven's irrepressible dramatics in the bizarre and sudden turn toward C-sharp minor, with an ominous pulsating pedal tone in the cello, and three unsettlingly insistent repeated notes (a Beethoven trademark), cut off without warning or ceremony. Moments like these, although brief, suggest a radically different aesthetic outlook from that of Mozart. The third movement features a theme and variations, a form for which Beethoven had a unique affinity. Channelling Haydn, the theme is generated from two pairs of three notes in stepwise motion, forming ascending and descending scales. Each successive variation adds incrementally finer subdivisions of the beat, giving rise to a huge variety of atmospheric effects. In the third variation, the second violin introduces a shimmering accompanying figure that seems to evoke scenes of nature, the coruscating flow of water, perhaps in reference to Haydn's oratorio *Die Schöpfung*. The triumphant final variation features a sudden and shocking modulation to B-flat major, playfully invoking Haydn while also anticipating Schubert's fondness for the flat submediant. The elaborate final movement has a pronounced undercurrent of irreverence and mischievousness that is uniquely Beethoven's, made all the more so because it coexists with a highly refined contrapuntal style. Long sections in *sempre piano* spin out Bach-like sequences of cycling harmonies, delicate and crystalline in texture, only to be interrupted by blocks of wanton force. Yet the movement ends quietly, with an elegant gesture of non-finality and open-ended-ness. Already in Opus 18 Beethoven presents an aesthetic that defies categorization, pointing forward into an unknown future.