

camera lucida

presented by the uc san diego department of music
sponsored by the sam b. ersan chamber music fund
monday, january thirty first
two thousand and eleven

upcoming concerts:

february 28: myriad trio

boccherini/salzedo: sonata in A major

damase: trio

bruce: eye of the night

cavaterra: newly commissioned work

march 14: camera lucida

bach: sonata for viola da gamba and continuo in G minor

stravinsky: the soldier's tale

tonight's concert will be broadcast saturday, february 12th at 7 pm on
kpbs-fm 89.5 or streaming at kpbs.org

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Dear Musical Friends!

After a nearly two-month hiatus, we welcome you back to the radiant chamber of Camera Lucida! And tonight, two very special works await you.

In my life, I have heard the Bruckner Quintet only once in concert, and that almost twenty-five years ago. For all of us performing tonight, this is our first direct engagement with this unique and rarely-performed chamber music work. However, during the 1990's, as principal cellist of the North German Radio Orchestra in Hamburg, I regularly performed most of the great Bruckner symphonies under Günter Wand, one of the most celebrated Brucknerian conductors. My last performance with Wand was in Suntory Hall, Tokyo, about a year before his death, in December of 2000; the program consisted of the Schubert "Unfinished" and the Bruckner Ninth, likewise "unfinished".

All of Bruckner's works are, in a sense, unfinished. Bruckner seems never to have wanted to end. His metier is, frankly, eternity; and he achieves in his music a unique quality of continuing, of suspending time, waiting, listening, floating. But the intensity of this engagement with time is overwhelming. There are passages which seem to evoke a cosmic clock, hearkened to with the spiritual intensity of a zealot. The first movement of the Quintet is marked with the unusual tempo marking "*Gemässigt*": the German word - translated roughly as "moderated" - suggests the taming of burning passions, the conscious *moderating* of a fervor not easily held in check; the marking seems to imply an ardor that is innately *immoderate*. And Bruckner's spirituality is expressed not just in length and sustenance, but also in the sensuous immersion in sound, the miracle of sound's physical complexity and richness.

I urge you to read Sheldon Nodelman's eloquent probings in the program notes of this work's rare qualities, and those of the magisterial Brahms Quintet which follows it. In a profound reading of the emotional ambiguities of the late Brahms, Nodelman points to the underlying darkness of an outwardly "sunlit" work. It is true that one senses, beyond the joviality and enthusiasm of Opus 111, the composer putting a brave face of good cheer on the agony of contrapuntal elaboration at work underneath. Counterpoint in this great composer's hands is emotional counterpoint, a polyphony of psychic states.

Our season continues apace! On February 28 we welcome back the Myriad Trio, and on March 14 we will revel in the snappy formalism of Stravinsky's "Soldier's Tale", performed and read in its entirety with a special cast of UCSD celebrity readers. (Who they are shall be revealed in due course). Janáček, Bach, Dvorak, Mozart, Mendelssohn and others follow... an abundance of musical experience which we hope you will continue to share with us!

Charles Curtis
Artistic Director

Quintet for Strings in F major [1879]

Anton Bruckner
(1824-96)

Gemäßigt
Scherzo: Schnell
Adagio
Finale: Lebhaft bewegt

- intermission -

Quintet for Strings in G major, opus 111 [1890]

Johannes Brahms
(1833-97)

Allegro non troppo, ma con brio
Adagio
Un poco Allegretto
Vivace, ma non troppo presto

Jeff Thayer, violin
Tien-Hsin Wu, violin
Che-Yen Chen, viola
Chi-Yuan Chen, viola
Charles Curtis, cello

Two Visions

by Sheldon Nodelman

The two illustrious chamber works confronted in this program exemplify the ideological conflict cleaving European musical culture in the latter years of the nineteenth century. They were written little more than a decade apart in that Vienna which considered itself, with some justification, the native homeland of serious musical thought. Each in its way aspired to continue and extend the language of form and expression achieved in that very city by Beethoven and Schubert in the opening decades of the century. Each is written for five stringed instruments, in either case augmenting the basic quartet scoring with a second viola according to the Mozartian precedent, rather than with a second cello after the model of Schubert's great C major quintet; and each is subdivided into the customary four movements. Here the similarities end.

The disruptive agent which split the Beethovenian tradition into warring camps was the music of Wagner (who of course conceived of himself as the older composer's rightful heir.) Its extended harmony, stretched to the breaking-point in *Tristan* (1859), its "endless melody", and its conversion of tone-color into structural value seemed to the conventionally-minded to threaten the clear differentiation of functional roles among compositional materials and the logical progression of the developmental process which formed the intellectual basis of "classical" composition. Others saw in Wagner's innovations a thrilling emancipation and the path to a "music of the future" empowered with hitherto unimaginable expressive potential. In the Vienna of the 1870s and 1880s the role of principal exponent of "the Wagnerian tendency" was assigned to Anton Bruckner, though in truth Bruckner – despite his admiration for the wizard of Bayreuth – was anything but a mere acolyte; his own compositional technique and vocabulary were most original and distinctive, in many ways quite unlike Wagner's. The forces of musical conservatism – who dominated the institutional structures of the Austrian capital – found their hero in Johannes Brahms. The two men could hardly have been more different in character and worldly fortunes: Brahms cosmopolitan, self-assured, heaped with the prerogatives of success and the favor of the establishment; Bruckner, shy and retiring, was exiled to a marginal position in the city's musical life, though he had his supporters, including the young Gustav Mahler and Hugo Wolf.

From our present perspective, the contrast between the two composers may seem overdrawn. For all his earnest emulation of his classical predecessors, Brahms was no reactionary. None other than Arnold Schoenberg, in an essay titled "Brahms the Progressive", detected in the elder composer's work anticipations of his own evolution from atonality to dodecaphony. Nonetheless, those contemporaries aghast at Bruckner's music had what seemed to them good reasons. To them it seemed to flaunt its ignorance of, or disregard for, that developmental logic which constituted the core of the classical tradition, with its values of rationality and intelligibility. It threatened thereby to undermine the ideal

Quintet for Strings in F major
[1879]

of *Bildung* – the self-formation through painstakingly acquired culture – that was central to the value-system of the educated bourgeoisie. Bruckner's works however are organized according to a different logic, one in which pitch relationships did not play the fundamental structuring role as in classical composition; that role, as Carl Dahlhaus has acutely observed, was assumed on multiple and superimposed levels by rhythm. Development, in Bruckner's idiosyncratic system, is largely replaced by juxtaposition, repetition, and far-reaching symmetries. Such a system governs Bruckner's giant symphonies; in the Quintet however it is applied in a still more radical, even unique, fashion.

The Quintet in F major is one of the most astonishing chamber works of the entire nineteenth century, and one of the greatest. As a chamber composition it is virtually unique in the composer's oeuvre, otherwise devoted almost exclusively to symphonies and concerted liturgical works. (An early string quartet is dismissed, perhaps unfairly, as a mere student project; a brief Intermezzo for string quintet is, as will be seen, a spin-off of the larger work.) It was composed between the end of 1878 and the summer of 1879, in the interval between the completion of Bruckner's Fifth and the beginning of work on his Sixth Symphony. The occasion was a request from Joseph Hellmesberger, director of the Vienna Conservatory at which Bruckner taught, and leader of a renowned string quartet. Rather than responding with the expected quartet, Bruckner opted for the expanded sonority offered by the quintet scoring. Hellmesberger was dissatisfied with various aspects of the work, demanding many changes, especially the replacement of its second movement, the Scherzo, which he found too difficult, and delayed its performance until 1885, on which occasion the above-mentioned Intermezzo was substituted. Contrary to what one might expect from a composer accustomed to deriving monumental effects from massive symphonic forces, the quintet is written entirely in the true spirit of chamber music, its delicate polyphony distributed through the five voices, and only rarely uniting into an "orchestral" sonority. Comparison has been drawn with the late quartets of Beethoven; they share, for example, the device of breaking a phrase into fragments successively allocated to different instruments. Whether or not (as has been questioned) Bruckner was as yet acquainted with the late quartets, and despite great differences overall in compositional technique, the Bruckner quintet does in fact share to a remarkable degree their most special and intimate characteristic – their *Innigkeit* (inwardness), for the experience of the Bruckner quintet is a journey into psychic interiority with few parallels in musical history.

Many of the stylistic features familiar in Bruckner's symphonies are, not surprisingly, to be found in the chamber work – the stepwise progressions and long crescendos. But others only adumbrated in the orchestral works here assume disproportionate significance, and otherwise unexampled ones are introduced. A freedom of modulation testing the limits of tonality after the model of *Tristan* sometimes touches on the frankly atonal – not the only

respect in which the Quintet seems to anticipate the expressionist radicalism of the Second Viennese School of Schoenberg and his disciples in the century to come. Suggestively, the quintet was written during the years (1877 - 1882) of the composition of *Parsifal* (though what knowledge, if any, Bruckner might have had of Wagner's final work is uncertain), for two devices notable in the opera recur in greatly accentuated form in his admirer's chamber composition. One is the systematic and allegorically freighted contrast between diatonic and chromatic passages, which are made to stand for different moral universes and different levels of reality. Another is the insistent breaking of the sonic continuum by fermata, marking musico-dramatically significant junctures, which articulate silence itself into meaningful sound. In the Quintet these often serve to fragment themes with some degree of melodic continuity and gestural cohesion into tenuous motivic chains whose halting progression is interrupted by repeated silences (one is sometimes reminded even of Webern) before expiring in questioning, inconclusive endings. The echoing iteration of these motivic shards creates a kind of sonic perspective, a suggestion of depths in which fleeting images – half-buried memories and flickerings of emotion – arise and dissolve. The result is a shadowed psychic landscape whose insubstantial contours contrast strikingly – despite all evidences of kinship – with the outwardly projected monumentality of the symphonies, one whose affinities are not so much with Impressionism, as has been proposed, as with Symbolism. Hence the itinerary through the classical four-movement succession, now a shell emptied of its structural logic – from the hesitant Moderato opening to the agitated Scherzo, to the heart-rending Adagio, the longest movement of the score and its emotional center, to the contrast-riven Finale – seems a troubled dream. Even the apparently affirmative cadential conclusion fails to restore us to “reality”, for its diatonic gesture is robbed by the otherwise pervasive chromaticism of all conviction.

From this shadow-land we emerge into the sunlit world of Brahms's String Quintet in G major, composed in 1890. Officially his second essay in the form, it is in reality the third, since he had written a first attempt already in 1862 (with a Schubertian two cello scoring), which he discarded and reworked into a Sonata for Two Pianos, itself to be reworked into the eventual Piano Quintet, Op. 34. Its immediate predecessor, the titular String Quintet No. 1, had been written in 1882, not long after Bruckner's, though before the latter's first complete public performance, and, curiously, in its same key of F. Whether a riposte was thereby intended can only be a matter of speculation. Brahms, weary of composing though only fifty-seven at the time, intended the G major quintet to be his last work. Fortunately for posterity, he was dissuaded soon after by the encounter with the clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld, and went on to write for this virtuoso a number of works including the superb Clarinet Quintet, Op. 115. The String Quintet in G, despite Brahms's resolve, has nothing valedictory about it: it is vigorous and affirmative in mood, sounding – as one contemporary had it – as if written “by a man of thirty.” It would be left to the not

**Quintet for Strings in G major,
opus 111 [1890]**

yet envisioned Clarinet Quintet to assume the attitude of autumnal leave-taking. Despite its extended harmonic structure, intricate motivic permutations and constant accentual displacements, the clarity and solidity of the String Quintet's architecture are never in doubt. Phrases are strongly outlined and decisively contrasted against one another, mustering our bodily responses in weight-bearing posture and energetic gesture in ways far removed from Bruckner's dematerialized ambiguities. This virile athleticism is much on display in the opening Allegro, where the first theme – derived from a once-projected Fifth Symphony – is entrusted to a cello, which must struggle to be heard above its heavily-scored accompaniment. In somewhat attenuated form these characteristics carry over into the reflective Adagio and the emotionally conflicted Allegretto third movement, to conclude in the idealized rusticity of its prancing Finale, submerging – or affecting to submerge – its complexities of retrospection in the fantasized authenticity of the *Volk*. In the last analysis the Quintet is two-faced, adroitly balancing the painful intricacies of its substructure with external bravado and good cheer. Only in his very last compositions, the poignantly evanescent piano miniatures, does Brahms's expression openly converge with what Bruckner, his opposite in so many respects, had dared in his own Quintet to reveal.

Sheldon Nodelman is an art historian who teaches in the Visual Arts Department at UCSD. His specialties include ancient classical art and the twentieth century avant-garde. Among other publications he is author of a book on the American painter Mark Rothko and another in preparation on Marcel Duchamp.

About the Performers

Violinist **Jeff Thayer** is Concertmaster of the San Diego Symphony as well as Concertmaster and guest artist of the Music Academy of the West (Santa Barbara). Previous positions include assistant concertmaster of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, associate concertmaster of the North Carolina Symphony, 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, and Dorothy DeLay. A native of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, Mr. Thayer began violin lessons with his mother at the age of three. At fourteen, he went to study with Jose Antonio Campos at the Conservatorio Superior in Cordoba, Spain. 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. Other festivals include La Jolla Summerfest, the Mainly Mozart Festival (San Diego), Festival der Zukunft, and the Tibor Varga Festival (Switzerland). Through a generous loan from Irwin and Joan Jacobs, Mr. Thayer plays on the 1708 "Sir Bagshawe" Stradivarius.

Violinist **Tien-Hsin "Cindy" Wu** enjoys a versatile career as a soloist and a chamber musician, having performed with renowned musicians and ensembles in Europe, the United States and Asia. She has appeared as soloist with the National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan and Taipei Symphony Orchestra in her native country, as well as with the Odessa Philharmonic Orchestra (Ukraine) and the Russian State Symphony Orchestra. As a solo recitalist and chamber musician, Ms. Wu has performed extensively in Taiwan, Europe and North America, at such prominent venues as New York City's Alice Tully Hall, Boston's Jordan Hall, Washington D.C.'s Kennedy Center and Library of Congress, as well as in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Vancouver. Artists with whom she has collaborated in concerts include: Toby Appel, Gary Graffman, Gary Hoffman, Nobuko Imai, Kim Kashkashian, Ani Kavafian, Ida Kavafian, William Preucil, Thomas Quasthoff, Julian Rachlin, Yuja Wang, Nikolaj Znaider, and members of the Alban Berg, Guarneri, Johannes, Miami, and Tokyo string quartets. In the spring of 2009, Ms. Wu appeared as guest violist with the Orion String Quartet during their tour of Asia. Recent summer festival appearances include the Marlboro Music Festival in Vermont, Music from Angel

Fire in New Mexico, Music@Menlo, Verbier Festival and Academy, Aspen Music Festival and the ENCORE School for Strings, where she served as a chamber music coach. Ms. Wu currently resides in Los Angeles and teaches as an adjunct professor at the Thornton School of Music at the University of Southern California.

Described by the Strad Magazine as a musician whose “tonal distinction and essential musicality produced an auspicious impression”, Taiwanese violist **Che-Yen Chen** (also known as “Brian Chen”) has established himself as a prominent recitalist, chamber, and orchestral musician. He is the first-prize winner of the 2003 William Primrose Viola Competition, the “President prize” of the 2003 Lionel Tertis Viola Competition. Currently the principal violist of San Diego Symphony, Mr. Chen has appeared as guest principal violist with Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. He has performed throughout the US and abroad in venues such as Alice Tully Hall, Merkin Hall, Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Jordan Hall, Library of Congress in D.C., Kimmel Center, Taiwan National Concert Hall, Wigmore Hall, and Snape Malting Concert Hall, among numerous others. A founding member of the Formosa Quartet, the first prize and the Amadeus prize winner of the 10th London International String Quartet Competition, Mr. Chen is an advocate of chamber music. He is a member Myriad Trio, Camera Lucida, Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society Two, the Jupiter Chamber Players, and has toured with Musicians from Marlboro after three consecutive summers at the Marlboro Music Festival. A participant at the Ravinia Festival, Mr. Chen was featured in the festival’s Rising Star series and the inaugural Musicians from Ravinia tour. Other festival appearances include the Kingston Chamber Music Festival, International Viola Congress, Mainly Mozart, Chamber Music International, La Jolla Summerfest, Primrose Festival, Bath International Music Festival, Aldeburgh Festival, Seattle Chamber Music Society Summer Festival, Taiwan Connection, and numerous others. Mr. Chen has also taught and performed at summer programs such as Hotchkiss Summer Portal, Blue Mountain Festival, Academy of Taiwan Strings, Interlochen, Mimir Festival, and has given master-classes at the Taiwan National Arts University, University of Missouri Kansas City, University of Southern California, University of California Santa Barbara, and McGill University. Mr. Chen began studying viola at the age of six with Ben Lin. A four-time winner of the National Viola Competition in Taiwan, Mr. Chen came to the US and studied at The Curtis Institute of Music and The Juilliard School under the guidance of Michael Tree, Joseph de Pasquale, and Paul Neubauer. Mr. Chen had served on the faculty at Indiana University-South Bend, University of California San Diego, San Diego State University, McGill University, where he taught viola and chamber music.

Top-prize winner of both the 2000 Fischoff Chamber Music Competition and the 2004 International Paris Viola Competition Ville d'Avray, Taiwanese violist **Chi-Yuan Chen** has already established himself as one of the leading violists in his generation. As a concert violist, Mr. Chen toured internationally performing at the White House in Washington, D. C., Suntory Hall in Tokyo, National Concert Hall in Taipei, City Hall in Hong Kong, Carnegie Hall in New York, Disney Hall and Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles, Victoria Hall in Geneva, National Centre of Performing Arts in Beijing, to name a few. Prior to his arrival in the United States in 1998, Mr. Chen performed as principal violist with a number of orchestras in Taiwan including the Taipei Metropolitan Symphony, Taiwan String Orchestra, the Taipei Opera Symphony Orchestra, and the Taipei Century Orchestra, among others. As a soloist, Mr. Chen performed concerti with the National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan, the Taipei Civic Symphony Orchestra and the National Defense Symphony Orchestra. As a guest artist, Mr. Chen has performed with numerous ensembles, including the Boston Chamber Music Society, Metamorphosen Chamber Orchestra, and the Gardner Museum Chamber Ensemble in Boston, where he was the principal violist from 1999-2002. An advocate chamber musician, Mr. Chen has been performing chamber music with internationally renowned artists such as Colin Carr, Elliott Carter, John Corigliano, Toshio Hosokawa, Ani and Ida Kavafian, Yo-Yo Ma, George Perle, Paula Robison, members of American, Arditti, Brentano, Cleveland, Emerson, Guarneri, Mendelssohn and Miami string quartets. A founding member of the Great Wall String Quartet resides in Beijing's Great Wall International Summer Academy, Mr. Chen has performed and toured extensively in Asian countries. As the only string quartet invited by United Nation, the quartet has participated in a documentary film for the 2009 World's Heritage Festival, in which their DVD recording is in stock of the UN's library archive. The quartet will release their debut album in April, 2011. Besides his performing career, Mr. Chen is a dedicated educator for the next generation. Being a guest professor of National Taiwan University of Arts, his international teaching appearances in variable settings such as master-classes, chamber music and concerto performances were highly acclaimed. Over the years, Mr. Chen has conducted more than fifty master-classes in universities and music conservatories in Europe, Asia and North America. In 2009, Mr. Chen was invited to be Macau Youth Symphony's Oversea Honorary Advisor. Also, his achievements and generous contributions to music education have been highly recognized and commended by Governments of Macau and Hong Kong. Mr. Chen holds a Doctoral degree from State University of New York at Stony Brook; both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree from the New England Conservatory, where he received highest distinction in performance on both degrees. His teachers include Ben Lin, James Dunham, Martha Katz, Katherine Murdock and Nobuko Imai. Mr. Chen currently resides in San Diego where he is a member San Diego Symphony Orchestra and a faculty member of San Diego State University.

Cellist **Charles Curtis** has been Professor for Contemporary Music Performance 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. He holds the Piatigorsky Prize of the New York Cello Society, and received prizes in the Naumburg, Geneva, Cassado and Viña del Mar (Chile) international competitions. He has appeared as soloist with the San Francisco Symphony, the National Symphony, the Baltimore Symphony, the Symphony Orchestra of Berlin, the NDR Symphony, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the Orquestra de la Maggio Musicale in Florence, the Janacek Philharmonic, as well as orchestras in Brazil and Chile. His chamber music associations have taken him to the Marlboro, Ravinia, Wolf Trap, La Jolla Summerfest and Victoria Festivals, among many others. Curtis has recorded and performed widely with soprano Kathleen Battle and harpsichordist Anthony Newman, as well as with jazz legends Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter and Brad Mehldau. He is internationally recognized as a leading performer of unique solo works created expressly for him by composers such as La Monte Young, Éliane Radigue, Alvin Lucier, Alison Knowles and Mieko Shiomi as well as rarely-heard compositions by Terry Jennings, Richard Maxfield, Cornelius Cardew, Christian Wolff, Morton Feldman and John Cage. Recent performances have taken him to the Angelica Festival in Bologna, the Guggenheim in New York, the MaerzMusik Festival in Berlin, Dundee Contemporary Arts, the Auditorium of the Musée du Louvre in Paris, the Kampnagel Fabrik in Hamburg, as well as Philadelphia, Austin, Ferrara, Chicago, the Konzerthaus Dortmund, Brooklyn's Issue Project Room and Harvard University. In the Bavarian village of Polling Curtis performs and teaches every summer at Kunst im Regenbogenstadl, a space devoted to the work of La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela. Last spring an in-depth interview with Curtis appeared on the online music journal Paris Transatlantic. Curtis is artistic director of San Diego's Camera Lucida chamber music ensemble and concert series.

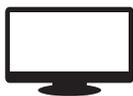
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