

upcoming concerts

november 5 (monday)

poulenc: violin sonata
martinu: musique de chambre no. 1
reger: clarinet quintet

december 5 (wednesday)

mozart string quintets:
k. 515 and 516 (c major and g minor)
k. 614 (e-flat major)

january 15 (tuesday)

beethoven: piano trio in e-flat, woo 38
lekeu: piano quartet
mozart: string quintet in d major k. 593

march 4 (monday)

brahms: piano quartet in g minor, opus 25
brahms: piano quartet in a major, opus 26

april 3 (wednesday)

beethoven: variations for piano trio on "ich bin der schneider kakadu"
mozart: string quintet k. 406 in c minor
faure: piano quartet in c minor

may 14 (tuesday)

mozart: string quintet in b-flat k. 174
bach: brandenburg concerto no. 5
beethoven: quartet in a minor, opus 132

artistic director - charles curtis
executive coordinator - colin mcallister
program notes - charles cross
recording engineer - tom erbe
production - jessica flores

tonight's concert will be broadcast saturday, october 13th at 9 pm on
kpbs-fm 89.5 or streaming at kpbs.org

for more information:
<http://www.sandiegosymphony.org/concertcalendar/cameralucida.aspx>

Taiwanese-American violist **Che-Yen Chen** has established himself as an active performer and educator. He is a founding member of the Formosa Quartet, recipient of the First-Prize and the Amadeus Prize winner of the 10th London International String Quartet Competition. Since winning the First-Prize in the 2003 William Primrose International Viola Competition and the "President Prize" of the Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition, Chen has been described by the Strad Magazine as a musician whose "tonal distinction and essential musicality produced an auspicious impression" and 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." Principal violist of the San Diego Symphony and Mainly Mozart Festival Orchestra, Chen 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 a member of Camera Lucida, Concertante Chamber Players and The Myriad Trio, which just released its debut album "The Eye of Night". Chamber music festival appearances include the Kingston Chamber Music Festival, Chamber Music International, La Jolla Summerfest, Seattle Chamber Music Society and Taiwan Connection. Summer of 2013 will commence the inaugural year for the Formosa Quartet's Formosa Chamber Music Festival in Taiwan.

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. 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. Curtis is artistic director of San Diego's Camera Lucida chamber music ensemble and concert series.

Performing solo and chamber music concerts internationally, **Reiko Uchida** is recognized as one of the finest, most versatile pianists on the music scene. She has appeared as soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Santa Fe Symphony, Greenwich Symphony, and the Princeton Symphony, among many others. As a chamber musician she has performed at the Marlboro, Santa Fe, Tanglewood, and Spoleto Music Festivals; as guest artist with the Borromeo, St. Lawrence and Tokyo 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 also a past member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center Two, Lincoln Center's program designed to nurture the careers of outstanding young musicians. A graduate of Curtis Institute of Music, Mannes College of Music and the Juilliard School, Ms. Uchida studied with Claude Frank, Leon Fleisher, Edward Aldwell and Margo Garrett. She currently resides in New York City, where she is an associate faculty member at Columbia University.



 UC San Diego | Department of Music



camera lucida

chamber music concerts at uc san diego
2012-2013 season

sponsored by the sam b. ersan chamber music fund

monday october first
two thousand and twelve

String Trio in c minor, Opus 9 Nr. 3 [1798]

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Allegro con spirito
Adagio con espressione
Scherzo: Allegro molto e vivace
Finale: Presto

Maerchenbilder for Viola and Piano, Opus 113 [1851]

Robert Schumann
(1810-56)

Nicht schnell
Lebhaft
Rasch
Langsam, mit melancholischem Ausdruck

Intermission

Piano Trio Nr. 1 in B major, Opus 8 [1854/1891]

Johannes Brahms
(1833-97)

Allegro con brio
Scherzo: Allegro molto
Adagio
Allegro

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

A curiosity of Beethoven’s catalog is the proliferation of string trios in the early period - five substantial works before 1798 - and the total absence of this instrumentation from his output henceforth. In fact, with the exception of two slight ventures by the teenage Schubert, the string trio disappears from European chamber music until it is revived by Max Reger in the very early 1900’s. Probably Beethoven was warming up for the dramatic launch of his Opus 18 string quartets in 1800 by working in the less canonical form of the string trio. All the same, his string trios are elaborate, ambitious works, opulently crafted to impress the circle of aristocratic music-lovers he moved amongst; indeed, never to be faulted for modesty, Beethoven’s dedication letter for the Opus 9 trios proclaims them to be “*la meilleure de mes oeuvres*”, “the best of all my works”, and he may not have been wrong.

The **String Trio Opus 9 Nr. 3** uses Beethoven’s “gothic” tonality of c-minor, a favorite key throughout his career. In c-minor he would produce histrionic effects of shock, horror and pathos - already tested out to full effect, and to the distaste of Haydn, in his Piano Trio Opus 1 Nr. 3 of 1793. At the end of the 1790’s his c-minor works include the *Sonate pathétique* Opus 13, the String Quartet Opus 18 Nr. 4, and the Third Piano Concerto - in fact, c-minor is almost the only minor key Beethoven employed for large-scale works in the early period! Unquestionably a sort of musical *pendant* to the gothic novels of the period - or, in Germany, the *Schauerroman*, or “shudder novel” - Beethoven masterfully deploys the ringing open strings of the trio for his characteristic *sforzando* effects, percussion-like throbs and bursts suggesting the delicious emotional jolt of violence and surprise. The vehemence of the style is completely new in European music; and it is matched in this work with feverish speed and a predominantly delicate, web-like sound in which drama hangs in perpetual suspense. In contrast, the *Adagio con espressione* slow movement seems to be a kind of romance or ballad, but of a solemnity that nearly crosses the threshold into the realm of sacred music. The Scherzo anticipates the hushed and bustling world of Mendelssohn, and the Finale ends not with thumping drama, but with a mysterious disappearance, the music evaporating like a troubled dream on waking.

Schumann composed the four ***Maerchenbilder, Opus 113*** in the short span of four days, between March 1st and 4th, 1851. On March 15 they were already being rehearsed by Clara Schumann and their dedicatee, Wilhelm Josef von Wasielewski. The fluency of Schumann’s creativity is astonishing; entire pieces, worked in jewel-like precision, full of stunning, utterly original detail, crossing his desk in a matter of hours.

The cycle of short character pieces, a staple of the Romantic solo piano repertoire since Schubert, moves in Schumann’s hands from the lonely pathos of the solo pianist to the sociable and conversational format of chamber music. Numerous such chamber music cycles, christened with evocative names such as “Fantasy Pieces”, “Romances”, “Pieces in the Folk Style” and “Fairy Tale Stories”, dot Schumann’s output from the early 1840’s until his removal to the asylum at Endenich in 1854 following his attempted suicide. The last of such sets was the cycle of five Romances for cello and piano, destroyed some forty years later by Clara.

Why the unusual choice of viola for the *Maerchenbilder*? The *Maerchen*, or fairy tale, evoked for Schumann a parallel world mixing magic, fairies, dreams, ghosts, unconscious fears and a lost and longed-for past associated with both childhood and some vaguely mediaeval or mythical fantasy civilization. The locus of the Maerchen is inevitably the forest; its atmosphere is shadowy, its colors ever-changing and permanently twilight. The viola, its sonority by nature dappled and shadowy, matches this atmosphere as if born to it. But even beyond its acoustical character, the social identity of the viola might have appealed to Schumann - a *Doppelgaenger* to the violin, a personality shift for the violinist (and Wasielewski was a violinist, concertmaster of Schumann’s orchestra), a quieter, more ruminative older sibling perhaps, about whom one does not know very much.

Whatever Schumann’s madness might have been, and we will never know, his personality was even in the happiest of times marked by willful imaginative swings and a superabundance of interchangeable, invented roles. The attributes of a child, one might note. Schumann seemingly clung to his juvenile preoccupations (fairy tales among them), yet in the transforming act of art-making he succeeded in framing the childlike in a speculative realm of utter lucidity and coherency.

The first of these four “pictures” mixes plaintive, arpeggiated melodies and accompanying figures with the flutterings of trills and awkwardly placed *appoggiaturas* and mordents - fairy wings, the rustling of leaves. The second is an archetypal horserider movement (the model here would be Schubert’s *Erlkoenig*), with brilliant syncopated accents and double-tongued bugle fanfares in the viola. Two contrasting sections, one wispy and the other a festive round-dance, alternate with the galloping main part, which in its third and final statement gallops off pianissimo into the distance. The third movement suggests a diabolically virtuosic dance, with the springing bow and *moto perpetuo* revolutionized by Paganini, whom Schumann admired (he composed piano accompaniments to the Paganini Caprices a short time later). Unperformable crescendos over held chords in the piano express Schumann’s commitment to the unreal. And the final “picture” is the gem of this group, a painfully simple folk melody shared between viola and piano in thirds, drifting at times into completely unexpected tonal regions, but ending finally without fuss or ceremony in its native D-major. Even Schumann’s indication of a “melancholic expression” over such serene and plainly beautiful music betrays the characterological contradictions restlessly at work in his innermost mind - madness, if you will.

Brahms at twenty, shy and self-effacing, a brilliant pianist but keeping his compositional efforts largely under concealment, began to make the rounds of the great musicians of his day. He visited Liszt in Weimar but was put off by the cult-like atmosphere. Joseph Joachim, the great Hungarian violinist, took Brahms under his wing, encouraged him, hosted him for an entire summer, and sent letters of high praise to other musicians who he thought might likewise encourage and assist Brahms. These included Wasielewski and the Schumanns, at whose door Brahms appeared on September 30, 1853. He stayed with the Schumanns an entire month; and the mutual inspiration exerted by the younger upon the older composer, and vice versa, must have been a kind of spontaneous combustion. Schumann flew into a phase of intense creativity, and in his famous essay “New Paths” declared Brahms a “young eagle” and a “musical savior”. And Brahms was forever changed, from that moment on an artist, a composer in equal standing with the greatest of his contemporaries. He had been “discovered”.

The **B-major Trio, Opus 8**, is the product of this exhilarating moment in Brahms’ career. He began work on it in January of 1854, and in March returned to Duesseldorf to assist Clara in the traumatic aftermath of Robert’s nervous breakdown and suicide attempt. Thus the Trio bridges the joyful moment of Brahms’ emergence with the tragic reality of Schumann’s final years, and the beginnings of the complex and enduring friendship between Brahms and Clara Schumann.

The Trio in its original form was a colossal work, bursting at the seams with inexhaustible melodic invention, variation, fugato sections and explicit citations of Beethoven songs which were dear to Schumann. However, the Trio that we hear in performance today is a very different work. Unusually, almost forty years later, Brahms took it upon himself to radically rework Opus 8, removing substantial sections, replacing themes (including the Beethoven quotations), and adding developmental material that is unmistakably the work of a much older composer. We are in the unique position of hearing, in one and the same composition, a melding of Brahms’ early and late styles. The effusiveness and ardor of the 20-year-old, punctuated with stretches of stark, sinuous, late-period contrapuntalism: a kind of time travel,

or a conversation between an aging man and his youthful self.

Brahms was a true natural; not a prodigy, but a *Musikant*, a working musician from a very young age. He learned piano, cello and horn; as a youth he contributed to his family’s finances by teaching music lessons, making arrangements of popular music for brass bands and dance ensembles, playing in taverns and for private parties, and accompanying in theatres. All this explains his easy and untroubled relationship to folk and popular musics and his lifelong love for vernacular forms. It also accounts for his extraordinary facility in setting instruments off to their best advantage. Brahms’ music is far from easy to perform, but it is crafted in such a way that, individually and collectively, a kind of ideal illumination of sonority is achieved. The part-writing in the B-major Trio verges on the miraculous, as strings and piano advance and recede, contract and unfurl in a perfect harmoniousness of proportions. The surface sheen of the best popular music is there, without any sacrifice in matters of structural complexity or expressive depth.

The opening *Allegro con brio* sets a tone of ardent anticipation, a burning warmth uttered softly. Monumental in scope, this movement is a continent unto itself, replete with mountain ranges, deserts and oceans. The Scherzo begins delicately, almost secretively, with fanfare rhythms hinting at sleeping armies. Once awakened, they storm ahead in massed columns spurred by syncopated accents. A trio section, inverting the Scherzo’s melodic shape but in a lyrical mode (while echoes of the fanfare rhythm reappear in the piano’s left hand), melts into something between a Romantic reverie and an all-out drinking song, arms intertwined at the bar and all sway back and forth. The *Adagio* presents a mood of near-stasis; hymn-like chords are given enough time to resonate mysteriously, the spaces between chords taking on an equal importance to the chords themselves. A secondary theme area evokes a mournful gypsy song, exotically chromatic in G-sharp minor. And the Finale compounds harmonic confusion with an ambiguously chromatic theme, ghostly at first, finally relentless and savage in its renunciation. The congeniality of the opening movement has been left behind, irreversibly, and the Trio ends with the merciless weight of B-minor eradicating all that went before.

about the performers

Violinist **Jeff Thayer** is currently the concertmaster of the San Diego Symphony as well as concertmaster and faculty member 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, 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.