

upcoming concerts

january 15 (tuesday)

beethoven: piano trio in e-flat, woo 38
lekeu: piano quartet
mozart: string quintet in e-flat major k. 614

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, december 15th at 9 pm on
kpbs-fm 89.5 or streaming at kpbs.org

for more information:

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

Violist **Che-Hung Chen** has been a member of The Philadelphia Orchestra since the spring of 2001, when he was hired by then-Music Director Wolfgang Sawallisch, becoming the first Taiwanese citizen ever to join the Orchestra. He has also served as acting associate principal viola under former Music Director Christoph Eschenbach. A three-time top-prize winner at the Taiwan National Instrumental Competition, Mr. Chen began his studies at the age of six with Ben Lin in his native Taipei, and he later entered the Curtis Institute of Music at age 14, where he studied with Joseph de Pasquale, retired Philadelphia Orchestra principal viola. As a vivid chamber musician, Mr. Chen was a participant at the Marlboro Music Festival from 1998 to 2000, performed on its 50th anniversary concerts in Boston and New York's Carnegie Hall in 2000, and toured with Musicians from Marlboro from 2001 to 2003. He has collaborated in chamber music settings with members of the Guarneri, Orion, Mendelssohn, and Tokyo string quartets, and artists such as Martha Argerich, Yefim Bronfman, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Lang Lang, Leonidas Kavakos, and Hilary Hahn. Performing annually at the Kingston Chamber Music Festival in Rhode Island, Mr. Chen has also participated in such festivals as the Ravinia, Caramoor, Saratoga, and Bridgehampton chamber music festivals and Music from Angel Fire. Mr. Chen currently serves on the faculty of Temple University's Esther Boyer College of Music and its Preparatory Division. He performs on a viola made by Carlo Antonio Testore in Milan, Italy, c. 1756.

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.



 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

wednesday december fifth
two thousand and twelve
7:30pm

Viola Quintets of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-91)

Quintet in C major, K. 515 [1787]

Allegro
Menuetto: Allegretto
Andante
Allegro

Quintet in g minor, K. 516 [1787]

Allegro
Menuetto: Allegretto
Adagio ma non troppo
Adagio; Allegro

intermission

Quintet in D major, K. 593 [1790]

Larghetto; Allegro; Larghetto; Tempo I
Adagio
Menuetto: Allegretto
Allegro

Jeff Thayer, violin
Anna Skálová, violin
Che-Yen Chen, viola
Che-Hung Chen, viola
Charles Curtis, cello

The three late Viola Quintets we hear in tonight’s program may not be as famous, nor as frequently performed, as some of Mozart’s signature late works - the last three symphonies, the late piano concerti, the Requiem or *The Magic Flute*, for example. But they are nonetheless every bit the equal of their more famous brethren; in certain senses, “pound for pound” as they say, “phrase for phrase,” they may even be superior, if that were possible. That they have escaped the desensitizing effects of cloying familiarity is a blessing. They are not iconic; we actually have to listen to them. This may partly be due to the simple fact that they are chamber music, and perform their miracles on a more intimate stage. No technicolor, no special effects, no bombast - fates are spun, measured and trimmed in the quiet interchange of five voices.

Not only are the Quintets definitive elaborations of Mozart’s art, they can be seen as unsurpassed examples of the style and form of Viennese classicism. This may seem an implausible statement, given that much of Haydn and all of Beethoven and Schubert had yet to be composed. But consider that classical sonata form, that special hybrid of dance, aria, narrative and tonal architecture, came into its first flush of radical, overwhelming bloom at the hands of the late Mozart; and that all that followed *responded to Mozart*. One can see in these works both the initiation of sonata form in its fullest incarnation, and its last appearance as an idea unto itself, fresh and unprecedented. For Haydn and Mozart, sonata form was not an established form at all, but a dynamic process involving infinite interrelations between motive and character, seamless variation, large-scale shifts in the perspective from which motives are heard through tonal modulation, and innumerable smaller and larger details. Where Beethoven imitated, extended and overturned Mozart, in order to make the form new, for Mozart there was no form apart from his own operations within it; it *was* new.

According to Charles Rosen (and he has counted up all the measures), the first movement of the **Quintet in C major K. 515** is the longest sonata *allegro* before Beethoven, longer than any other first movement in Mozart’s entire output. And on closer inspection, he finds that the exposition section is longer than any exposition of even Beethoven’s except for the Ninth Symphony, which is the same length. A startling statistic, especially inasmuch as Mozart’s movement does not, on listening, *feel* long. But this is not a length born of slowness or stasis, but of an unbelievably prudent husbanding of thematic resources: very stable tonal underpinnings; partial statements that only complete themselves over time; deferral of conspicuous changes; a conscious spacing of material that includes pronounced silences.

It makes sense that Mozart would lay out a larger space for the more complex forces of the quintet compared to the string quartet. The expanse is needed so that the additional instrument - especially massed as it is in the middle - can breathe and be heard. The sense of massing - as an architectural concept - is felt both in the spacious layout of the movement and in the textural or “vertical” weight of the instrumentation. Yet the overall effect, indeed throughout the four movements of this Quintet, is of a serene and understated grandeur, not by any means a show of gross strength or size. The *Andante* movement features the first violin and the first viola in a *concertante* or even operatic dialog, against a quiet background that puts the highly ornate *sol*i in relief. The Menuet is striking for its haunting octave doublings and a kind of Eastern-tinged Viennese air - the *ancien regime* - that almost anticipates Brahms. The Finale is again of magisterial length, swift yet unhurried, and largely quiet.

The most famous of the Viola Quintets, the **Quintet in G minor K. 516** must owe its fame to the complexity and ambiguity of its expressive qualities. Not tragic in a public or social sense, its sinuous textures and delicately-spun sound world project instead a difficult-to-define psyche of great inner turmoil, misgivings, regret, profound anxiety. Gleaming through this shadowy texture are brief moments of warmth and sweetness, like memories,

abandoned almost as soon as they have sounded. Already in the second measure the first violin’s chromatic descent resting on E-natural shocks us, if we truly listen to it. In the secondary theme, a pair of rising minor sixths is followed by a rising minor ninth, a melodic event so jarring one wonders how a composer of Mozart’s pedigree would even have heard it in his imagination. Coming out of a *Zeitgeist* that defined music as agreeable entertainment, we must acknowledge this work as a pivotal moment suddenly recasting music as confession, as a view into the singular and private, even tortured, sensibility of its creator.

The Menuet extends this singularity onto the plane of composition: despite the rhythmic scaffolding of what was once a social dance, Mozart’s phrase lengths and intervallic shapes live in a kind of independent tandem state, connected to the dance structure by the barest of threads. The *Adagio* is a muted, chorale-inflected hymn in E-flat major, again incredibly free in its at times improvisatory flights, with unexpected breakages in the flow. Most dramatically, this *Adagio* is followed immediately by yet another, perhaps even slower *Adagio*, as introduction to the Finale. Like a funeral march, with solemn *pizzicati* in the cello, one can imagine a drum marking out the steps of the processional, cold and echoing off stone. Yet the Finale proper suddenly emerges as a soaring resolution in G major! The extremely virtuosic first violin part is voluble and bustling, animated by sheer ebullience and suspended aloft by the gentle volleys of the ensemble.

Many listeners are surprised by the seemingly breezy 6/8 swing and sing-song simplicity of the Finale. Charles Rosen notes, “It is a movement that has often disappointed.” Even if there is some mischief here on Mozart’s part, it should be observed that the theme is not snappy, but yearning, striving toward the heights again and again. And the darkness of the preceding movements has not been entirely banished, as moments of introspection recur and passages repeat in the minor. The weight of the Quintet is concentrated irrevocably in the successive slow movements; the hopefulness of the major Finale does nothing to change that.

In atmosphere, the **D major Quintet K. 593** returns to the tranquil expansiveness of the C major Quintet; but what is unique to the D major is the specifically Mozartean fusion of high ceremony and high comedy - comedy understood as an emotional state in which deeply human characteristics and foibles are exposed and framed, such that their recognition elicits release and relief in the form of laughter, awe, surprise, tears. Within the august scene-setting of this Quintet’s *Larghetto* introduction, with its stark rising-arpeggio announcements in the solo cello, and against the exquisitely worked detail of the entire Quintet and its dazzling contrapuntal surface, Mozart’s comedic art emerges little by little. The slow introduction presents surprising convolutions of unexpected tonal shifts, yet the Allegro follows with a bucolic theme featuring off-balance accents and crashing chords - perhaps a musical equivalent to the *picaresque* character of 18th-century novels. This becomes the material of intricate contrapuntal development. The reappearance of the slow introduction as coda is a most unusual turn, bringing us back to the fundamental seriousness of the occasion; yet the movement’s conclusion is an unaltered re-statement of the first eight bars of the *picaresque* Allegro - the serious and the offhand in immediate proximity. The Adagio, in G major, begins as song, heartfelt and intensely warm, and grows into something overtly dramatic. Not exactly comedy, but an emotional inversion of a kindred sort marks the moment directly preceding the recapitulation: in what must be five of the most stunning bars in all of Mozart, a powerful cadence heading toward E minor suddenly gives way to a moment of delicate dissonance, a tight-rope like precariousness that could be mistaken for Stravinsky, descending *pizzicati* in the cello and a rising counter-melody in the violin, returning through this magical trap-door to the opening. Children’s games are underway in the Menuet, including the rhythmic pun of moving the same theme over by one beat to confuse its meaning, as well as a regular confounding of who is the leader and who are the followers. In the Finale laughter itself may be the source of the theme, a quick 6/8 in jig time of weirdly close chromatically descending tones, spinning around on itself relentlessly like a

whirligig or a perpetual motion machine. Repetitive but somehow at the same time intricately varied through multiple fugues and canons and vertiginous modulations, ceremony has been cast by the wayside in an expression of pure being. The presumed teleology of sonata form ends here in something circular, seemingly pointless, of no moment, yet overflowing with inventiveness and unexplainable joy.

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. Through a generous loan from Irwin and Joan Jacobs and the Jacobs’ Family Trust, Mr. Thayer plays on the 1708 “Sir Bagshawe” Stradivarius.

Anna Skálová graduated with a Performer Diploma from Indiana University in 2012 under the tutelage of Jaime Laredo and with a Bachelor’s degree from the University of Michigan in 2011 where she studied with Stephen Shippis. Upon graduation from the U of M, she was awarded the prestigious Augustus Stanley Award for distinguished work in music. Anna had served as concertmaster of the University of Michigan Symphony Orchestra, Indiana University Orchestra, New York String Orchestra and Michigan Philharmonic, with which she also appeared as a soloist. In 2008 Anna obtained the Grand Prize in the Michigan American String Teachers Association Competition and First Prize at the ASTA Competition in Atlanta. She has won the concerto competitions of the Marquette Symphony Orchestra (Michigan) and the University of Michigan. Skálová appeared as a soloist in the 8th Emirates International Peace Music Festival in Dubai. Anna is a native of the Czech Republic and joined the San Diego Symphony in 2012.

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.He is a member of Camera Lucida, Concertante Chamber Players and The Myriad Trio, which just released its debut album “The Eye of Night”. Summer of 2013 will commence the inaugural year for the Formosa Quartet’s Formosa Chamber Music Festival in Taiwan.