

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 Meglioranza, 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.

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.

camera lucida

chamber music concerts at UC San Diego
Monday, November 7, 2016 7:30 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Piano Quartet in E-flat major, WoO 36 Nr. 1 Ludwig van Beethoven

Adagio assai
Allegro con spirito
Thema: Cantabile - Variations 1-6 - Thema: Allegretto

String Trio in E-flat major, Opus 3 Ludwig van Beethoven

Allegro con brio
Andante
Menuetto
Adagio
Menuetto
Finale: Allegro

intermission

Piano Quartet in D major, Opus 23 Antonin Dvorak

Allegro moderato
Andantino - Variations 1-5 - Coda
Finale: Allegretto scherzando - Allegro agitato

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

Early, and Very Early Beethoven

Measured against such true prodigies as Mozart, Mendelssohn and Korngold, we cannot consider Beethoven a “child wonder” of music. His earliest works are not his most impressive. This fact sets the terms for the extraordinary trajectory we can observe over his career. Tonight we have the pleasure of hearing a work written by a 15-year-old from the German provinces whom almost no-one, at that time, had heard of. In a sense, we are hearing a work by an unknown composer of 1785, unknown even to us, as this music does not quite square with the monumental historical entity evoked by the name Beethoven.

The curious designation “WoO” stands for “*Werke ohne Opuszahl*” or “Works Without Opus”, and denotes that part of Beethoven’s output either prior to Opus 1, or to which Beethoven did not assign an opus number. There are over 200 works “WoO”, and while this sounds like an enormous number, many of them are short occasional pieces, marches and dances and the like. The Piano Quartet WoO 36 is nothing of the sort; it is a fully elaborated three-movement work perhaps calculated to impress Haydn, his teacher-to-be. The attractive opening Adagio shows an unusual freedom in the piano writing, with free-floating runs and flourishes that almost look forward to Chopin. Most “Beethovenian” is the second movement, a driving three-four *Allegro* in the very unusual key of E-flat minor (a key which Haydn, in fact, favored). The relentlessness of this movement unmistakably shows Beethoven’s incipient ambition and self-projection. Finally a set of modest variations, marked *Cantabile*, round off the quartet, with a theme that sounds a bit like a candidate for some unknown country’s national anthem. Individual variations feature, in turn, the violin, the viola (in a gentle Viennese-sounding *Adagio*) and the cello; for good measure an E-flat minor variation is introduced; and again the piano writing, especially as the later variations build up momentum, dazzles.

The role of the composer in the late eighteenth century was that of a servant and a household craftsman. Haydn was required to wear livery as employee of the Esterhazy family; until 1779, all of Haydn’s compositions were legally the property of his employers. Originality was only valued insofar as it provided surprise and delight; personal expression, the staging of the composer’s own inner feelings in his music, had no specific function in this negotiation. It is only very slowly, through the later works of Haydn and Mozart, that what we now think of as “the personal” began to emerge as an aesthetic value. Against this perspective, it is fascinating to observe a youthful work of Beethoven sitting uncomfortably between *use value*, chamber music as a pleasing product directed at a presumed recipient, and *personal expressive value*, the person of Beethoven as individualistic, creative genius.

With a work like Opus 3, we are in the presence of a completely evolved craftsman who is almost impatient with his own skills, ostentatiously demonstrating a kind of unconstrained, effortless flow of musical invention. Probably composed in 1794 (Beethoven was by then 24 years old), the trio is obviously modeled on the celebrated String Trio Divertimento of Mozart, K.

563 - sharing instrumentation, key, number and lay-out of movements. But Beethoven does not attempt to match the profundity of the Mozart. Opus 3 remains a virtuoso entertainment piece, full of jokes, shocks, feints and diversions.

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 - a sort of laboratory of string writing. In some ways it is harder to compose for string trio than for string quartet: there is no padding, no filler, and each individual part is under a bright light. Like the miraculous three-part works of Renaissance composers like William Byrd, every utterance is crucial, and the end result is far more than the sum of its parts.

Opus 3 need not be described. It is one of those works of art that describes itself in its appearing, in its becoming audible. Every turn, every exchange of voices, every false cadence and piquant shift in tonality is laid out in a clarity that verges on the demonstrative. A penchant for repetition - heard immediately as the music begins - turns on itself and provides the strategic foil for jarring left turns that would not register so powerfully had the music not lulled us in the first place. Repetition turns into length, and length into scale - here is music that is meant to take up time, to continue, to linger, to just be there.

Music as Desire

Antonin Dvorak stands with Schubert, Schumann, Mendelssohn and Brahms as the quintessential progenitors of the concept of chamber music in the nineteenth century. Inextricably bound up with notions of democracy and an emerging merchant or bourgeois class, chamber music migrated from court and aristocracy to the homes of socially ambitious commoners, courtesy of the musical treasures fabricated by composers who were themselves (with the exception of Mendelssohn) of decidedly modest means. It is impossible to separate out from the music its inscribed undertones of yearning, striving and hoping for a better, more cultivated, more keenly felt life. Chamber music, in the works of these composers, is inherently a music of longing; then, it may have been a longing for a projected future, while today it is often a longing for a vanishing past. Perhaps the moment has come when we can hear this music outside of time and history, as a music that models and proposes something unattainable, a state beyond our sphere of reality; not an object of desire, but desire itself.

Our piano quartet plunges gently into the pulsations of repeated piano chords and mini-themes which are themselves repeated, not insistently, or strategically, as in the Beethoven; but in the way one repeats an action for the pleasure

it gives. There is a depth of detail in the opening movement which cannot possibly be rendered completely - rhythmic arabesques, embellishments, dotted rhythms and syncopations, grace notes which barely fit in the constantly moving texture. The development section hearkens back to Schubert in its tireless, restless shifts in tonality. A very few themes are re-stated, without much motivic bending or shaping or varying, but re-illuminated, as it were, each time in the subtly different shadings of a new key. Modulating rather than modifying, we find the same characters, with the same expressions and quirks, constantly returning but in different surroundings. This lends a dream-like anti-logic to the proceedings, as if you had come home to find your best friend from childhood tending your garden except that it’s the botanic garden of a great city you visited many years before.

The slow movement could be considered a *Dumka*, a sort of Slavic character piece loved by Dvorak. Literally, *Dumka* means thought, reflection, introspection. For Dvorak it is a place of inexhaustible melancholy. *Schwach und zart*, weak and with a gentle touch, is his performing direction in the second of these five variations, variations which progressively resemble less and less the theme from which they are derived. Layered lines of dark, cloying chromaticism draw us into the almost unbearably sweet enclosures of a house, a public place, a restaurant on the Lower East Side in which displaced émigrés ply and knead their fiddles as a tactile reaching towards a lost homeland.

Dispensing with a scherzo, Dvorak gives us an omnibus Finale which alternates between *Scherzo* and *Allegro agitato*; the one is in a waltz-like three-eight, and the other in an oddly irregular four-four, full of grand and jagged phrases which verge on the Tchaikovskian in their self-conscious, epic ambitions. Again, tonalities trip over each other in flurries, remote keys such as A-flat minor and C-sharp minor stretch to a breaking point any link to the nominal key of D major. In a brief coda Dvorak seems to throw up his hands, combining the two theme areas in a furious send-off, as if to say, enough already, enough of all those passions.

Artistic Director – Charles Curtis
Recording Engineer – Andrew Munsey
Program Notes – Charles Cross
Program Associate – Rachel Beetz
Promotions Design – Jennifer Bewerse
Production Manager – Jessica Flores

Upcoming Camera Lucida performances:
December 5, 2016
January 9, 2017
February 20, 2017
April 17, 2017
May 15, 2017