



UC San Diego

ARTS AND HUMANITIES
Music

Formosa Quartet

April 9, 2017 – 3 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall



This concert is co-sponsored by the Chuan Lyu Endowment
and the Taiwan Lecture Series at UC San Diego

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Five Taiwanese Folk Songs – Wei-Chieh Lin (world premiere)

Spring Breeze
Hengchun Folksong
Seaport Goodbye
Dark Sky
Rain Night Flower

Fourth String Quartet – Béla Bartók

Allegro
Prestissimo, con sordino
Non troppo lento
Allegretto pizzicato
Allegro molto

Intermission

Lullaby for String Quartet – George Gershwin

Four Grappelli Jazz Tunes – arr. by Jasmine Lin

Djangology
Star Eyes
Sweet Lorraine
Shine

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Five Taiwanese Folk Songs – Wei-Chieh Lin

These five folk songs represent the rich and diverse cultural history of Taiwan through different eras. The first and last songs, “Spring Breeze” and “Rain Night Flower,” were written in the 1930s by one of the first Taiwanese-born composers during the Japanese occupation of Taiwan. “Hengchun Folksong” is from the southern part of Taiwan, with influences taken from the aboriginal tribes. “Seaport Goodbye,” written in the 1940s, was based on the composer’s own love affair with a Japanese woman who had to leave Taiwan after the war. “Dark Sky” is a popular song usually sung in traditional Taiwanese dialect (similar to the dialect found in southeastern China). This song vividly captures the lifestyle of farmers and peasants during the post-war era of Taiwan.

–Wei-Chieh Lin

Fourth String Quartet – Béla Bartók

Bartók’s third and fourth quartets were written within a year of each other, fully ten years after his second quartet. In July 1927 Bartók heard Alban Berg’s Lyric Suite for string quartet at a concert in Germany. According to Stephen Walsh in his BBC guide to Bartók’s Chamber Music, this was the likely stimulus for Bartók returning to quartet writing. Berg had incorporated Schoenberg’s atonality into a wide range of techniques, producing extreme contrasts of mood, texture and tempo, whilst still aiming for the traditional virtue of beauty of sound. Bartók married Berg’s eclectic approach to his own enthusiasm for Hungarian folk-music, with its powerful rhythms and harsh, dissonant sounds. He did this within that most refined and intellectual of musical forms – the string quartet. Not surprisingly, Berg is said to have found the harsh energy of Bartók’s fourth quartet ‘too cacophonous.’ Bartók’s third and fourth quartets are a richly complex, exciting and sometimes bewildering marriage of the composer’s passionate appreciation of Hungarian folk-music with the intellectual rigour of classical musical forms and of recent atonal innovations.

For example, a significant theme in the first and last movement of the fourth quartet is a violent 6-note arch-shaped motif which first occurs near the beginning. The motif moves in semitones – one of the characteristic intervals of Hungarian folk-music. But notice also that the original motif in the first violin is immediately echoed by an inverted version in the second violin, to produce a dissonant series of seconds with the original. A major structural feature of Bartók’s Fourth Quartet is that the five movements form an arch-like structure ABCBA, with the middle, slow movement the heart of the work. Bartók described the quartet as follows: ‘The slow movement is the nucleus of the piece, the other movements are, as it were, bedded around it: the fourth movement is a free variation of the second one, and the first and fifth movements are of the identical thematic material. Metaphorically speaking, the third movement is the kernel, movements I and V the outer shell and II and IV, as it were, the inner shell.’

Although the fourth movement is a ‘free variation of the second one’, the two movements have very different sounds. The second is extremely fast and muted, like fluttering moths but with a variety of strange sounds – slithering semitones, slides and strums; the fourth is from a land of

darting invertebrates, punctuated by the ‘Bartók pizzicato’ where the string is pulled so that its release slaps the fingerboard.

Between all this restlessness, the third movement is a very different world – the stillness of Bartók’s ‘night music’. The upper strings hold long chords against the cello’s initial plaintive melody. The slowly-changing chords become more dissonant, the melody more decorated and the tempo more agitated before settling back down again. The chords do not traditionally harmonize the melody, rather they supply notes that the melody lacks. For example, after about 20 bars the held chord has 6 of the notes of the chromatic scale, the cello melody the other six - a striking example of Bartók’s intellectual rigour within a movement of undeniable beauty and emotional power. The exciting last movement lashes us with harsh chords and leads us in a wild peasant dance throwing around and finally flinging in our face the 6-note motif that we started with.

–Chris Darwin

Lullaby – George Gershwin

Sometime around 1919 George Gershwin worked on a short piece for string quartet in the course of his harmony and orchestration studies with Edward Kilenyi. The manuscript of the quartet lay forgotten on his brother Ira’s shelf for four decades until harmonica virtuoso Larry Adler reminded Ira of its existence. It was not until October 28, 1967, that the Lullaby was publicly performed in its original version for string quartet.

George Gershwin’s ability to cross over between jazz and “art music” has always been considered one of his great claims to fame, and the Lullaby, written as a “classical” piece, enhances that claim. The Lullaby is designed in three main sections framed by a short introduction and coda. Softly sustained chords and violin harmonics lead to the first main section, which features a gently syncopated accompaniment. The central section itself contains three parts, marked Semplice, Recitativo, and Dolcissimo. The return to the main section is altered and shortened and the piece closes with a unifying return to the harmonics of the introduction with a little tossed-off pizzicato for impish finality.

–Jane Vial Jaffe

Four Grappelli Jazz Tunes – arr. by Jasmine Lin

The wonderful wizard of jazz violin Stéphane Grappelli boasted one of the most lasting careers in music, playing well into his 80’s and never retiring from the stage.

His renditions of:

“Djangology,”

by Django Reinhardt, and the title song of a compilation album by Django Reinhardt and Grappelli, containing some of the pair’s last collaborations—

“Star Eyes,”

by Gene de Paul & Don Raye, comparing a crush’s eyes to April stars, hoping for the thrill they seem to promise—

“Sweet Lorraine,”

by Cliff Burwell—even when it rains, the sky is blue and the sun not missed, because sweet Lorraine has said “yes”—

and “Shine,”

by Ford Dabney, lyrics by Louis Armstrong—

(Referencing a real man, Shine, who was beaten during the New York City race riot of 1900, the song is a black man’s self-affirming response to non-blacks calling him “Shine” and, by association, black shoe-shine polish—

Chocolate drop, that’s me. Just because my teeth are pearly, just because I always wear a smile, makes no difference, baby. That’s why they call me “Shine”) —

are brought to you from Formosa Quartet with love.

Winners of the First Prize and the Amadeus Prize at the London International String Quartet Competition in 2006, the **Formosa Quartet** is “one of the very best quartets of their generation” (David Soyer, cellist of the Guarneri Quartet). Its debut recording on the EMI label was hailed as “spellbinding” (*Strad Magazine*) and “remarkably fine” (*Gramophone*), and the quartet has given critically acclaimed performances at the Ravinia Festival, the Caramoor Festival, the Library of Congress, the Da Camera Society of Los Angeles, the Chicago Cultural Center, the Walter Reade Theater at Lincoln Center, Rice University, San Francisco State University, and Wigmore Hall in London. Formed in 2002 when the four founding members came together for a concert tour of Taiwan, the Formosa Quartet is deeply committed to championing Taiwanese music and promoting the arts in the land of its heritage.

The members of the Formosa Quartet are the founders and faculty members of the annual Formosa Chamber Music Festival in Hualien, Taiwan. Inaugurated in 2013 and modeled after American summer festivals such as Marlboro, Ravinia, the Taos School of Music, and Kneisel Hall, FCMF is the product of long-held aspirations and years of planning, and represents one of the quartet’s more important missions: to bring high-level chamber music training to talented young musicians in Taiwan and first-rate music to Taiwanese audiences.

In the 2015-2016 season, the Formosa Quartet continues a two-year residency with Art of Élan, a San Diego arts-presenting organization. As ensemble-in-residence, the Quartet is working with

UC San Diego professor of composition Lei Liang to create a new piece based on music indigenous to the aboriginal tribes of Taiwan. The culmination of the two-year project was the premiere performance of the commission in Spring 2016 and looks ahead to a new disc of music inspired by Hungarian and Taiwanese folk traditions.

In its relatively brief existence, the Formosa Quartet's active commissioning has contributed significantly to the 21st century's string quartet literature. They premiered Taiwanese-American composer Shih-Hui Chen's *Returning Souls: Four Pieces on Three Formosan Amis Legends* in 2014, and the Quartet's recording of its first commission from Ms. Chen, *Fantasia on the Theme of Plum Blossom*, was released on the New World Records label in 2013. Other pieces recently written for the Quartet include three pieces by Dana Wilson — *Hungarian Folk Songs*, *The night of h's*, and *Apart* — Wei-Chieh Lin's *Pasibutbut*, and Thomas Oboe Lee's *Piano Quintet and Jasmine Variations*.

The members of the Formosa Quartet — **Jasmine Lin, Wayne Lee, Che-Yen Chen, and Deborah Pae** — have established themselves as leading solo, chamber, and orchestral musicians. With degrees from the Juilliard School, Curtis Institute of Music, and New England Conservatory, they have performed in major venues throughout the United States, Asia, and Europe, and have been top prizewinners in prestigious competitions such as the Paganini, Primrose, Fischhoff, Naumburg, and Tertis competitions. As chamber musicians, they have appeared regularly at the Marlboro, Kingston, Santa Fe, Ottawa, Ravinia, Crans-Montana, and Schiermonnikoog festivals, as well as at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, La Jolla Summerfest, the Seattle Chamber Music Society, and Open Chamber Music at Prussia Cove. They have held principal positions in the San Diego and Cincinnati Symphonies, and have taught at the University of Southern California, California State University Fullerton, Roosevelt University, Taos School of Music, Stanford University, McGill University, and the Juilliard School. In 2014 the Quartet became the faculty quartet-in-residence at the National Youth Orchestra of Canada.

The Formosa Quartet forms an octet with violins Joseph Curtin (2001) and Andrea Guarneri (1662), an Enrico Catenari viola (1680), and a Vincenzo Postiglione cello (1885) on generous loan from the Arts and Letters Foundation.

Upcoming Events

Spring 2017

Springfest

April 8-16, 2017
Conrad Prebys Music Center

Camera Lucida

April 17, 2017 – 7:30 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

WEDS@7 presents

On Structure

April 19, 2017 – 7 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Music Center
Experimental Theater

Kartik Seshadri, sitar

April 22, 2017 – 7:30 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

WEDS@7 presents

Takae Ohnishi

April 26, 2017 – 7 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Computer Music Focus

Gil Weinberg

April 27, 2017 – 5 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Music Center
Experimental Theater

Production Credits

Department of Music

Rand Steiger, Chair
Barbara L. Jackson, MSO
Linda Higgins, Fiscal Manager
Elizabeth Cuevas, Fiscal Assistant
Jessica C. Flores, Production Manager

Andrew Munsey, Recording Engineer
Nicholas Serafini, Recording Assistant

Jeremy Olson, Technical Production Specialist
Stage and Front of House crew:
Laura Furtado, Alexandra Harbert
and Samantha Ramming

Meghan Roos, Promotions Manager
Jennifer Bewerse, Promotions Design
Jordan Morton, Program Associate

Audience members are reminded to please silence all phones and noise generating devices before the performance. As a matter of courtesy and copyright law, no unauthorized recording or photographing is allowed in the hall. UC San Diego is a non-smoking campus.

A black and white photograph of the San Diego skyline at night, with city lights reflecting on the water in the foreground. The skyline includes several prominent skyscrapers, some with illuminated tops, and a mix of building heights. The water in the foreground is dark, with bright reflections of the city lights.

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