

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.

HANAH ELIZABETH STUART, hailed as a performing artist who “wields a violin with unmistakable panache” (Theater Mania), represents a new and exciting 21st century breed of violinists. Currently Associate Principal Second Violin of the San Diego Symphony, Ms. Stuart was previously a violinist with the Utah Symphony and the Ars Viva Symphony Orchestra. Ms. Stuart has served as Concertmaster of The Juilliard Orchestra, The Juilliard Chamber Orchestra, The YouTube Symphony Orchestra, and she has also served various Principal roles in festival orchestras including the Music Academy of the West and the Aspen Music Festival. She joined the San Diego Symphony Orchestra in 2016. Ms. Stuart made her solo debut at age ten, performing at a Southwest Symphony benefit concert. She made her Symphony Center debut in Chicago at 16, and continued to solo with several American orchestras under Maestros Nicholas McGegan, Thomas Hinds, Francesco Milioto and Allen Tinkham among others. Ms. Stuart has taken top prizes in competitions including the Skokie Valley Young Artist Competition, the Blount Slawson Young Artist Competition, and the NFAA ARTS Awards among others. Ms. Stuart has a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree from The Juilliard School where she studied under David Chan and Joel Smirnoff. She previously studied with Roland and Almita Vamos at the Music Institute of Chicago. Other mentors include Kathleen Winkler, Shlomo Mintz, Ily Kaler, Rachel Barton-Pine, Desiree Ruhstrat, Simin Ganatra and Paul Kantor among others.

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.

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.

Camera Lucida takes great pleasure in thanking all our supporters for their generous support, in particular Laurette, Janice, Eliza, Marion, Julia, pH Projects, Carol, Lanna, Eloise, Mary and Michael, David, Harry, Irene, Geoff, Stephan and Civia, Bob and Ginny, Caroline, Suzanne, Donald and Evelyn, John and Pauline, Amnon, Nelson, Eric, Barry, Georgiana.

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Chamber Music Concerts at UC San Diego

Monday, November 5, 2018 – 7:30 p.m.

Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Terzetto for Two Violins and Viola, Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)
 Opus 74

Introduzione: Allegro ma non troppo
 Larghetto
 Scherzo: Vivace
 Tema con Variazioni

Serenade for Two Violins and Viola, Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967)
 Opus 12

Allegamente - Sostenuto ma non troppo
 Lento ma non troppo
 Vivo

intermission

Quartet for Piano and Strings Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)
 in c minor, Opus 15

Allegro molto moderato
 Scherzo: Allegro vivo
 Adagio
 Allegro molto

Jeff Thayer and Hanah Stuart, violins
 Che-Yen Chen, viola
 Charles Curtis, violoncello
 Reiko Uchida, piano

Dvořák’s *Terzetto* came into existence by pure serendipity. In 1887 Dvořák found himself in the midst of a dry spell, having not composed a multi-movement chamber work in four years. A young chemistry student (who was, more importantly, a skilled amateur violinist) named Josef Krus was renting a room in the Dvořák family home. Dvořák would often overhear Krus and his teacher playing duets; perhaps feeling excluded, and being a violist, he composed a four-movement trio for two violins and viola, intended for the three of them to perform together. Evidently Dvořák overestimated Krus’ technical abilities; in an ironic twist, Krus, who inspired the piece, was ultimately unable to perform it. As consolation, Dvořák then recomposed the *Terzetto* as the four Op. 75 “Miniatures”, which Krus did perform.

The most obvious distinction of Dvořák’s *Terzetto* is its unusual instrumentation, which creates both problems and opportunities for the composer. From the outset, Dvořák enthusiastically embraces these challenges to create intensely poignant music, often placing the instruments in a high register to achieve an ethereal kind of beauty. In the graceful, lyrical, almost Schubertian first movement, the instrumental lines often overlap and cross. The texture is less hierarchical, more egalitarian, and therefore more transparent than that of a string quartet. It is relatively easy as a listener to distinguish between the three instruments. The viola is particularly mobile, providing a foundation while also emerging frequently with the primary melody, standing out much more than it might in the presence of a cello (particularly when the violins play in parallel).

Dvořák also seems to channel Schubert’s use of distant key-relationships and nonstandard cadences. The first movement ends on a half-cadence in E major, which flows directly into a majestic *Adagietto*. The third movement, however, is quintessential Dvořák: a furious *Scherzo* centered around a-minor, but highly modal in character, featuring an offbeat melody, alternating groupings of the beat, modal-type harmonies suggestive of Bohemian and Czech folk music, and wild shifts in dynamic and timbre (at one point, Dvořák instructs the performers to play *ponticello*, meaning close to the bridge, creating a thin, scratchy sound).

The final movement is structured as a theme and variations characterized by a fascinating, almost Schubertian tonal ambiguity: each variation begins with a sequence of 7th chords, eventually preparing to cadence in either C-major or c-minor. However, Dvořák masterfully manages to move back and forth between alluding to major and minor modes, maintaining a sense of suspense that seems to accelerate the onset of each new variation. Dvořák’s poetic sense of humor is evident in the ending. After preparing a climactic cadence, the three instruments cadence on octave C’s, neither major nor minor.

Kodály belongs to a rare group of composers-polymaths. Musicians may associate his name with the method of using hand-signs to train solfège. In addition to his efforts as a composer and pedagogue, Kodály, along with his friend and compatriot Bartók, was one of the early pioneers of ethnomusicology. Starting in 1905, and for the better part of two decades, they catalogued the folk music of Romania, Hungary and Slovakia, studying it and mining it for inspiration. In doing so they fashioned a musical language at once novel and ancient, and thus timeless.

Kodály, like so many other 20th century composers, suffered from obscurity due partly to politics. The Serenade in particular dates to trying times -- namely, the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the First World War, and the military and internal political

conflicts that followed. Kodály was blacklisted because of his influence under the previous government, as well as alleged ideological conflicts with the new government. The Serenade was eventually performed in Salzburg; Bartók wrote in his 1921 review of “a genuine, modern product of Hungarian culture... it reveals a personality with something entirely new to say and one who is capable of communicating this content in a masterful and concentrated fashion. The work is extraordinarily rich in melodies”.

Though called a serenade, the three-movement work bears almost no structural resemblance the the genre as typified by Mozart’s famous serenades. Instead, it has a strongly programmatic, almost operatic quality, which Kodály’s biographer described eloquently as an imagined allegory:

“At the start, we hear three musicians, playing a serenade beneath a woman’s window. Then comes a song from the lover (its exceptionally expressive melody fulfilling all the requirements of the contrasting theme of a sonata); while the alternation between the voices of the musicians and the lover, heard now separately, now together, complies strictly with the rules of the development and the reprise. The second movement opens with a dialogue between the lover (viola) and his mistress (first violin), while the tremolos of the second violin suggest the atmosphere of night. To the lover’s pleading, the woman replies with laughter, coyness gradually turning into passionate rejection. At this point, the lover dismisses the musicians (this is where the principal theme of the first movement, the serenade motif, is repeated); whereupon the woman relents, and it is now the man who laughs. Lastly, the third movement confirms the understanding between lover and mistress, the lighthearted banter between viola and violin developing into a song of satisfied love; and the tale is brought to an end with an invigorating dance.”

In many ways, Fauré’s two piano quartets represent the pinnacle of his chamber music output, and perhaps therefore his entire oeuvre; both are deeply inspired works that, though composed in relative youth, showcase Fauré’s prodigious gifts as a composer. He adopts an idiosyncratic approach to harmony and tonality that seems to subtly foreshadow Debussy and Ravel, while also demonstrating a mastery of the craft and techniques of composition as employed by Brahms. Serendipitously, both piano quartets are linked in different ways to Russia: the first was composed following a visit of the noted pedagogue, theorist, and composer Sergei Taneyev to Paris in the autumn of 1876. Taneyev and Fauré seem to have shared aesthetic values, and the Russian composer referred to the “astounding beauty” of Fauré’s freshly composed A-major violin sonata in a letter to his friend Tchaikovsky. Tchaikovsky eventually met Fauré on a trip to Paris in 1886, at the première of Fauré’s second piano quartet. The relationship between the two composers was characterized by an uncommonly deep mutual admiration. Tchaikovsky wrote to Taneyev: “I’ve met several musicians, including your friend Fauré. I very much approve of him, both as a man and as a musician.... I’ve heard an excellent quartet by him.” In a gesture of gratitude and respect, Fauré presented Tchaikovsky with signed copies of both piano quartets with the inscription: “To my master and friend, P. Tchaikovsky, from his affectionately devoted Gabriel Fauré.”

Notably, both piano quartets invoke characteristics of Russian music. For example, in the powerful, singing opening theme of the first movement, the strings play a static pentatonic melody outlining a c-minor triad, while the piano interjects offbeat chords, coloring the melody with distant, constantly shifting harmonies. The interval of a

minor third features prominently in both the melody and the bass, foreshadowing Fauré’s clever interplay between different keys later on. The dizzyingly rapid harmonic shifts and the borrowing of harmonies from different keys often occur multiple times within a single phrase, as well as between adjacent phrases and at the ends of phrases. As the theme is reiterated, Fauré increasingly introduces poignant, fleeting passing harmonies. Fauré’s supersaturation of harmonic color coincides with a meticulous attention to textural and motivic details; these, too, seem to constantly shift in subtle ways that add vividness and contrast to his broad harmonic palette.

This poignant, fleeting quality makes Fauré’s music intensely gripping, as well as highly demanding; as a listener, one fears that even a momentary lapse in concentration can squander unimaginable beauties. For example, the *Scherzo*, while relatively sparse in texture, is full of playful exchanges between piano and strings. The main theme, initially in E-flat-major, consists of a pair of three-bar phrases which are unusual both for their odd length as well as their endings: the first phrase cadences in the home key, whereas the second cadences coyly in the relative minor. It is possible in the opening bars, where the strings pluck bare chords, to hear the phrase structure as either 2+2+2 or 3+3, but the entrance of the piano melody disambiguates the phrase structure as a pair of three-bar phrases. The combination of the unified pizzicato chordal texture in the strings, the single line melody of the piano, and the unusual phrase structure suggests a certain innocence: the movement develops as a kind of flirtatious game between the strings and the piano.

The saturation of harmony, rhythm, and texture is matched by a saturation of affect, as in the *Adagio*. Here, Fauré achieves a unique kind of despondent stoicism (the ascending scale melody bears a strange similarity to the main theme of Rachmaninov’s *Trio Élégiacque*, composed in 1892). The disarming intensity of the third movement is perhaps explained by Fauré’s personal life. In 1877, the year following Taneyev’s visit to Paris, Fauré’s fiancé, the singer Marianne Viardot, suddenly ended their engagement. Fauré had pursued Viardot for five years before, and was reportedly devastated by her departure. The second section of the *Adagio* features a melancholic, wounded accompanying pattern in the piano of alternating triplets and duplets, seeming to painfully remember the innocent courtship of the *Scherzo*, or even to fantasize about an impossible reconciliation. One can speculate that Viardot may even have found her way into the quartet in the form of its overall lyrical, sung qualities.

Fauré was unable to complete the quartet for several years, and it did not première until Valentine’s Day, 1880. It is perhaps also telling that Fauré rewrote the fourth and final movement in 1883. The revised fourth movement is surprisingly optimistic, and features an impetuous initial theme in C-minor which seems to flow directly from the main theme of the *Adagio*, competing with a more ambiguous, more mysterious second theme in E-flat. The two themes are eventually reconciled in a C major coda. What is perhaps most interesting is that the original fourth movement no longer survives; it was probably destroyed deliberately by Fauré himself in the last year of his life. When asked about Viardot many years later, Fauré remarked that their separation had favored him.

—Amir Moheimani