

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.

ANTHONY BURR has worked across a broad spectrum of the contemporary musical landscape as clarinetist, composer and producer. Recent albums include a recording of Morton Feldman’s *Clarinet and String Quartet* and *The Long Exhale*, a duo with pianist Anthony Pateras, that was selected as one of the top 10 modern classical releases of 2016 by *The Wire* magazine. Upcoming releases include the premiere recording of Alvin Lucier’s *So You...* (Hermes, Orpheus, Eurydice), a disc of chamber music by Lucier and Feldman and an archive of duo material created with Icelandic bassist/composer Skuli Sverrisson. He is Associate Professor of Music at UCSD.

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.

San Diego Symphony Orchestra Associate Concertmaster **WESLEY PRECOURT** has appeared as a soloist with numerous orchestras around North America and is an avid recitalist, recording artist and new music collaborator. He made his debut with the San Diego Symphony in February 2016 and has been presented by Art of Elan, the Musical Merit Foundation, First United Methodist Churches of San Diego and Escondido and the La Jolla Athenaeum’s concert series. He is also a member of Renga, a chamber ensemble focused on avant garde music, which recently received critical acclaim for their performance of Boulez’s Repons under the baton of Steven Shick. Wesley was featured at the dedication ceremony of the Heifetz Studio at The Colburn Conservatory where he also collaborated with Paul Neubauer, Ida Levin, Ronald Leonard, and Paul Coletti. He has also won awards at international competitions, including the Spotlight Awards of Los Angeles, the NFAA ARTS Awards and the Kingsville International Competitions, among others. Wesley is a graduate of the Thornton School of Music at USC and a recipient of the Artist Diploma at the Colburn Conservatory.

Taiwanese-American violist **CHE-YEN CHEN** is the newly appointed Professor of Viola at the University of California, Los Angeles Herb Alpert School of Music. 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 unflinchingly combined lucidity and poise... lyricism and intensity.” Recent seasons have included concerts at documenta 14 in Athens, Greece; the Dia Art Foundation’s Dia:Chelsea space in New York; the Darmstadt Festival in Germany; the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas; the Geometry of Now festival in Moscow; the Serralves Museum in Porto, Portugal; and Walt Disney Hall in Los Angeles, leading a performance of La Monte Young’s *Second Dream*. 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.

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Chamber Music Concerts at UC San Diego

Monday, April 1, 2019 – 7:30 p.m.

Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Piano Quartet Movement in a minor (1876)	Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)
Four Pieces for Clarinet and Piano, Opus 5 (1913) <i>Mässig</i> <i>Sehr langsam</i> <i>Sehr rasch</i> <i>Langsam</i>	Alban Berg (1885-1935)
from Eight Pieces for Clarinet, Viola and Piano, Opus 83 (1910) <i>Rumanian Melody: Andante</i> <i>Allegro con moto</i> <i>Nocturne: Andante con moto</i> <i>Moderato</i>	Max Bruch (1838-1920)
<i>intermission</i>	
Two Pieces for Cello and Piano (1899)	Anton Webern (1883-1945)
Three Little Pieces for Cello and Piano, Opus 11 (1914)	Webern
Hier ist Friede from the Altenberg-Lieder, Opus 4 Nr. 5 (1913) (arranged for Violin, Cello, Piano and Harmonium, 1917)	Alban Berg (1885-1935)
Five Bagatelles for Two Violins, Cello and Harmonium (1876) <i>Allegretto scherzando</i> <i>Tempo di Menuetto: Grazioso</i> <i>Allegretto scherzando</i> <i>Canon: Andante con moto</i> <i>Poco allegro</i>	Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904)

Reiko Uchida, piano
 Anthony Burr, clarinet
 Jeff Thayer and Wesley Precourt, violins
 Che-Yen Chen, viola
 Charles Curtis, violoncello

In a 1909 letter to Busoni, Schoenberg writes:

My goal: complete liberation from form and symbols, cohesion and logic. Away with motivic work! Away with harmony as the cement of my architecture! Harmony is expression and nothing more. Away with pathos! Away with 24 pound protracted scores! My music must be short. Lean! In two notes, not built, but ‘expressed.’ And the result is, I hope, without stylized and sterilized drawn-out sentiment. That is not how man feels; it is impossible to feel only one emotion. Man has many feelings, thousands at a time, and these feelings add up no more than apples and pears add up. Each goes its own way. This multicolored, polymorphic, illogical nature of our feelings, and their associations, a rush of blood, reactions in our senses, in our nerves; I must have this in my music. It should be an expression of feeling, as if it really were the feeling, full of unconscious connections, not some perception of ‘conscious logic.’ Now I have said it, and they may burn me.

One would be hard-pressed to find a more passionate declaration of the power of music to capture, in its very acoustic energy, the tremblings and perturbations of the human soul. Schoenberg formulates here the new-found Expressionist urge to lay bare the psyche, in all its complexity and uncertainty, through art. Tonight’s program spans a bridge over the chasm that separates the 19th from the 20th centuries, joining a series of musical fragments and miniatures into a sequence facing both backwards and forwards in time.

Mahler began work on a **Piano Quartet in a minor** in his first year at the Vienna Conservatory, probably at the age of 15; one movement was performed at the conservatory with Mahler at the piano in 1876. Like much of Mahler’s early music, the work remains shrouded in obscurity. Mahler never published it, and contemporary scholarly consensus holds it to be unfinished (although a tantalizing sketch of an inspired *scherzo* exists). The work was so obscure that, following Mahler’s death, the manuscript remained lost until the 1960’s, when it was unearthed by the composer’s widow, Alma Mahler-Werfel.

Based on Mahler’s letters and other records, it appears that a considerable number of the composer’s early works have been tragically lost. The piano quartet movement is his only surviving work of chamber music; however, there are indications that in the period of 1875-78 Mahler also composed a Nocturne for cello and piano, another piano quartet (for piano, two violins, and viola), a complete violin sonata, a suite for solo piano, a piano quintet movement, and a string quartet movement. Very little is known about these works. Reminiscing about his student compositions in an 1896 letter, Mahler wrote: “In those days I couldn’t be bothered with all that – my mind was too restless and unstable. I skipped from one draft to another, and finished most of them merely in my head. But I knew every note of them, and could play them whenever they were wanted – until, one day, I found I had forgotten them.”

Although written in Brahms’ musical language, Mahler’s unique musical fingerprints are everywhere in this single movement. His touch is perhaps most evident in the music’s emotional landscape, which is characterized by an overwhelming, raw, unfiltered quality. Likewise, the music has a uniquely Mahlerian affinity for brutal morbidity, juxtaposed with delicate, Schubertian lyricism. As in his symphonies Mahler makes liberal use of long pedal tones and nested harmonies to create dramatic tension. The narrative arc of the movement suggests a pot boiling over: the music often seethes with an ambient nervous energy, which develops into a kind of uncontrolled fever and eventual release of energy. In this way, Mahler leans away from the notion of music as an abstract or symbolic form of representation, moving instead toward a vision of music as a direct indexing of mental states, the way a thermometer registers temperature. We hear Mahler taking his first steps forward toward the 20th century, seeding the eventual end of Romanticism as well as the beginnings of Modernism.

Berg’s **Four Pieces for Clarinet and Piano** form a set of miniatures whose brevity and density are solitary in his output. They were composed the same year that Schoenberg (Berg’s teacher) composed his radically compact *Six Little Piano Pieces*, Op. 19, and are clearly inspired by them. One can only imagine the sensational impact Schoenberg’s weirdly ambiguous, haiku-like, aphoristic piano pieces must have had on the impressionable Berg. However, Berg’s own experiments with miniature form resulted in a traumatic rebuke from Schoenberg, though it is somewhat difficult to establish why. Certainly, these four miniatures are riveting and deeply inspired. Berg favors expressive gestures over abstract motives, and the music feels bound together in time by recurring harmonies in a way that is somehow more organic than synthetic. Berg also leans strongly towards Expressionism’s love for extreme contrasts, intricate expressive details and unconventional playing techniques. For example, the last piece ends with a C Major seventh chord depressed silently with the right hand in the piano so as to allow the strings to softly resonate sympathetically when a dense low chord is repeatedly struck. Likewise, the first section of the first piece ends with a menacing descending line in the clarinet which crescendoes precipitously to *fortississimo* while the clarinetist introduces flutter-tonguing, creating a feral, almost nightmarish effect.

Like much of Bruch’s late music (as well as the late music of other uncompromisingly Romantic composers in the early 20th century), the **Pieces for Viola, Clarinet and Piano** (1910) are musical anachronisms. Perhaps the only feature that betrays their contemporaneity to Mahler, Berg, and Webern is their pervasively melancholic mood. They also betray the influence of Schumann, especially the sets of character pieces which are unified by an overarching mood or affect. Bruch achieves this melancholic atmosphere often by pulling the music in anticlimactic directions, seeming to project resignation or vulnerability. The piano plays a mostly accompanying, even if at times a stormy and contrapuntally dense, role, while the other instruments often finish each other’s melodic lines, lacking sufficient will or energy on their own; Bruch seems to deliberately underutilize the instruments for dramatic effect.

Webern’s two slow **Pieces for Cello and Piano**, each marked *Langsam*, are his earliest compositions, composed at the age of 15. Like Mahler’s piano quartet, they firmly inhabit the musical language of 19th century Romanticism while also bearing the composer’s unique signature. Webern’s music, even at this early age, is characterized by a tremendous density combined with a kind of Mozartian simplicity: nothing feels superfluous, and every note feels pregnant with meaning. Webern also makes use of a strikingly broad harmonic palate of unusual harmonies, forward-looking considering the time and the composer’s age. The music is most un-student-like in its emotional sincerity and command of dramatic tension: at 15, Webern exhibits no discernable insecurity with the simplest of means, while placing faith in the ability of the performer to embody the work’s musicality.

Webern’s mature style, in contrast to Berg’s, is devoid of any traces of traditional Romanticism. The musical language is almost more mathematical than verbal, and his later music often seems to depict a universe without time, in which all things exist simultaneously, merely passing in and out of consciousness. Though Webern was likely influenced by Schoenberg’s Op. 19 miniatures for solo piano (and perhaps, to a lesser extent, Berg’s Op. 5), in the **3 Little Pieces for Cello and Piano** he seems to have soundly outdone Schoenberg in brevity and density: the last movement is a mere 10 bars, but has as much musical content as a classical sonata movement. Webern’s music captivates immediately with the variety and vividness of the instruments’ sonorities, and despite feelings of timelessness, it does seem to project a kind of narrative. Notwithstanding the obvious differences between the two sets of pieces for cello and piano, both works contain the same combination of Schoenbergian expressivity, Bach-like intricacy and Mozartian brevity.

Berg’s **Hier ist Friede** sets these lines by the poet Peter Altenberg:

*Here is Peace. Here I can cry my heart out.
Here the incomprehensible, immeasurable pain
that burns my soul can find release...
See, here there are no people, no settlements.
Here is Peace! Here the snow falls gently into flowing water...*

(from “Picture-Postcard Texts”, Neues Altes, 1911.)

Imagery of nature, and especially the evocation of vivid emotional states in a fluid interchange with nature imagery, is a recurring theme in Expressionist music, as we see in seminal works such as Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde*, Schoenberg’s *Erwartung* or *Verklärte Nacht*. In *Hier ist Friede*, the last of the Altenberg-Lieder, Berg begins with an ominously slow and soft passacaglia bass line, painting an image of the eerie silence created by snow falling into a stream.

Peter Altenberg, the proto-hippie poet of Viennese coffee-houses and a nominee for the Nobel Prize in 1914 (along with Schnitzler), stood in a special personal relationship to Berg and his fiancée and later wife, Helene Nahowski: one scholar describes their three-way friendship as a “Platonic ménage à trois, unique to the fusion of love and aesthetics embraced by Berg and Altenberg..” Another personal milieu marks the occasion for the chamber arrangement of this song, originally for voice and large orchestra: Berg’s friendship with Mahler’s widow, Alma Mahler-Gropius. The arrangement is dedicated to “Alma, Gucki, and their quartet-partners” (Gucki is Anna Mahler, the then-13-year-old daughter of Alma and Gustav Mahler). Altenberg’s poetry is striking for its brevity, and for its capture of evanescent, fleeting, dreamlike emotional states, memories or passions. Berg reduces even further: his song lyric excerpts only a part of the original poem, making of it a fragment of a fragment. Yet another level of fragmentation results from the omission of the voice, and therefore of the poetic text itself: the chamber arrangement is a wordless echo of the setting Berg had originally made for Altenberg’s poem.

Dvorák’s outwardly unassuming quartet of **Bagatelles** is one of several chamber works written by him for an unusual combination of instruments. The harmonium was a relatively new instrument at the time, and it often feels as if the composer is challenging himself to explore its possibilities as a full-fledged, equal instrumental partner. The instrument’s accordion-like sound lends itself to the kind of Eastern European folk music that inspired Dvorák; its swelling, reed-like timbre stands as figure for a kind of melancholic longing, echoed in the surging, searching melodies of the strings. It has been suggested that Dvorak, who played the viola in string quartets with his close friends, replaced the viola with the harmonium in order to afford himself this novel pleasure.

A “bagatelle” is a kind of trifle, an easy task, something tossed-off. Beethoven’s bagatelles for solo piano are perhaps the best known, although they often fail to deliver on the promise implied by the title. Dvorák’s bagatelles are somewhat truer to form in this respect, and often feature straightforward, transparent structures filled with earworm-inducing folk-melodies. Also, unlike Beethoven’s bagatelles, Dvorák’s seem to form a more unified set, as the main theme of the first bagatelle returns in the middle-section of the final one. Moreover, the motif of a five-note descending scale is embedded like an easter egg in each of the five.

—Amir Moheimani and Charles Curtis