

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 Meglitoranza, 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.

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 Schick. 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 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.

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.

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*.

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Chamber Music Concerts at UC San Diego
 Monday, April 29th, 2019 – 7:30 p.m.
 Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Piano Quartet in E-flat Major, K. 493 (1786)

W. A. Mozart
(1756-1791)

Allegro

Larghetto

Allegretto

String Quartet in G Major, Opus 18 No. 2 (1801)

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Allegro

Adagio cantabile

Scherzo: Allegro

Allegro molto, quasi Presto

intermission

Quintet for Clarinet and Strings in A major, K. 581 (1789)

W. A. Mozart
(1756-1791)

Allegro

Larghetto

Menuetto; Trio I; Trio II

Allegretto con Variazioni

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

Mozart: Piano Quartet in E-flat Major, K. 493 (1786)

Mozart was commissioned by the publisher Franz Anton Hoffmeister to write three piano quartets in 1785. Hoffmeister evidently believed that the piano quartet genre would prove financially lucrative, well suited as it was to domestic music-making in upper-class salons by amateur musicians. Mozart, however, composed music of an entirely different kind - subtle, emotionally complex, technically demanding. Of the first quartet, in g-minor, a contemporary reviewer wrote:

Many another piece keeps some countenance even when indifferently performed; but this work of Mozart's can in truth hardly bear listening to when it falls into mediocre amateurish hands and is negligently played. This happened innumerable times last winter: nearly everywhere I visited and was taken to a concert, some young lady or pretentious middle-class demoiselle or some other impudent dilettante came up to me with this engraved Quadro and fancied that it would be enjoyed at a noisy gathering. What a difference when this much-advertised work of art is performed with the highest degree of accuracy by four skilled musicians who have studied it carefully, in a quiet room, where the suspension of every note cannot escape the listening ear.

Thus, while the quartet was an artistic triumph for Mozart, its musical inaccessibility proved to be a financial disaster for Hoffmeister. So disillusioned was he that he offered Mozart a generous part of the agreed-upon fee in exchange for being released from the contract (an offer which Mozart accepted). Mozart went on to compose and publish the second quartet, tonight's E-flat major, the following year, and with a different publisher.

Indeed, the E-flat major quartet is in certain ways more accessible than the first, having a more lyrical and emotionally approachable character. The resounding opening theme of the first movement features shifting chords over an E-flat pedal tone followed by a descending cadential gesture in the violin; this theme was reappropriated by Haydn as the opening theme of his final piano sonata, likewise in E-flat major, composed in 1794. Mozart's theme is also surprisingly similar to the opening of Schumann's monumental Op. 44 piano quintet, again in E-flat major. As in so much of Mozart's chamber music for keyboard and strings, the keyboard instrument balances favorably against the combined weight of the strings; quasi improvisatory solo passages like miniature cadenzas (particularly in the outer movements), and the alternation of solo piano and string "tutti" passages, invite comparison to Mozart's piano concerti.

Although the work lacks the contrapuntal intricacy of some of Mozart's late music, a tendency toward extreme chromaticism (particularly in the middle of the second movement) and an underlying expressive intensity link the quartet to other masterpieces from the same year (the 23rd and 24th piano concerti come to mind). Mozart's way of generating thematic material is hardly straightforward, nor is it entirely logical or predictable; it is difficult to identify motivic consistency between themes, and Mozart often takes unexpected liberties with the music's phrase structure. Much of Mozart's sublime art lies in the contrast and interaction between different themes and their subtle development. The first and second themes of the first movement (in E-flat and B-flat, respectively) are overshadowed by the transition between them, which features a wistful melodic figure that travels restlessly through foreign harmonies, and cadences evasively. This transitional theme makes up the bulk of the movement's contrastingly restless middle-section, and when it returns in the recapitulation, it feels as if it had undergone a kind of subjective or psychological development, subtly altered by context and memory. The opening phrase of the second movement is likewise reinterpreted multiple

times throughout the movement, as is the main gavotte-like theme of the final movement. Mozart's treatment of transitional material is evoked poetically by musicologist Scott Burnham in his book, *Mozart's Grace*:

Moments granting sonic presence to such a precarious transformation cannot last, but they can be renewed. For Mozart's music is music to be reheard: the listening experience lives and lives again to anticipate and then savor such moments. The beautiful intimations we have been listening for in Mozart's music are ever renewable. As such, they offer a model of musical experience in the modern age, for the cultural practice of rehearing music continues to be sustained on the wager that what music offers us is ever renewable... Despite the harrowing destruction of so many cherished fantasies -- from Mozart's age to our own, from the Terror of 1793 to the various terrors of the long twentieth century -- it seems we can still find ourselves exquisitely suspended in the sound of Mozart, still find ourselves haunted by his uncanny intimations. What Mozart offers to modernity is the sound of the loss of innocence, the ever renewable loss of innocence. That such a sound is beautiful may have nothing to do with Mozart and everything to do with us.

Beethoven: String Quartet in G major, Op. 18 No. 2 (1798-1800)

This second of Beethoven's six Opus 18 string quartets (marking his first foray into the genre) is often called the most "Classical" of the Opus 18 quartets (which are, in turn, the most "Classical" of all Beethoven's quartets). The outward classicism is plainly evident from the first bar, in which an elegant flourishing gesture in the first violin seems to depict a person bowing or curtsying. However, as is often the case in Beethoven, gestures are pushed to extreme limits; despite all its classical tropes and trappings, through its maximalist approach to motivic development, Beethoven's quartet hints at the composer's mature style. In the first movement, for example, Beethoven makes use of many Haydnesque elements: octave doubling of a bare melody or motif for dramatic effect, sudden pauses or interruptions, ambiguous cadences, unexpected modulations. He does so to such a degree and with such frequency, however, that these elements soon cease to be noteworthy or unexpected; they come to form the work's essential musical content.

The Scherzo is similarly Haydnesque in its use of motifs, and in the silly, lackadaisical way in which Beethoven transitions between thematic areas. Beethoven's unique, somewhat sophomoric sense of humor is further distinguished from Haydn's by an occasional undercurrent of urgent intensity that almost borders on the disturbing, when contrasted with the Scherzo's wholesome vulgarity. The final movement consists of an enigmatic theme and variations which begins with a suspiciously innocuous, singsongy, childlike melody, quickly veering unexpectedly and shockingly into the dark depths of d minor, only to return to G major for the start of the following iteration. Beethoven toys with similarly subversive ideas towards the end of each subsequent variation, inserting his own slightly disturbing, tangential and often absurd trains of thought: when the theme is inexplicably restated in E-flat major, Beethoven simply repeats a single bar in a chromatically moving sequence until the music arrives again in G major. Unlike many of Beethoven's sets of themes and variations, in the finale of Opus 18 No. 2, rather than incrementally increasing the music's complexity, energy, tensions or virtuosity, Beethoven manages to create a sense of narrative drama through a Herculean effort to sustain the music's manic pace.

Mozart: Quintet for Clarinet and Strings in A major, K. 581 (1789)

The A major clarinet quintet sits as the only one of its kind in Mozart's output. It was premiered barely two years before the composer's death at the age of 35 in December 1791, and is a quintessential exemplar of Mozart's late style. Mozart's late works preserve the thematic fecundity, classical elegance, and emotional subjectivity of his earlier music, while introducing daring harmonies, extreme chromaticism, and intricate, neo-baroque counterpoint. Additionally, Mozart's uniquely lyrical way of writing for reed instruments is at its peak: the distinct timbre of the clarinet, its ability to create long phrases, and the distinctive articulations and dynamic subtleties available to the instrument, render it as first among equals within the ensemble.

The first movement plays upon the contrast between two main themes: a sanguine, if somewhat wistful, first theme in A major, and a more restless second theme which often reappears in unusual ways (as early as its first iteration, moving from E major to e minor when passed from the first violin to the clarinet). Whereas the first theme moves through the movement more or less unscathed, the subsequent themes, as well as their attendant transitions, are deconstructed into their constituent elements in Beethovenian fashion.

Perhaps anticipating Beethoven, Mozart ends the quintet not with a Rondo, but rather with a theme and variations. Mozart preserves the initial theme's structural transparency while developing it quickly from something childishly simple into an elaborate contrapuntal exercise as early as the first variation, with the clarinet introducing a new melody in counterpoint against the main theme in the violins. The overall feeling of the fourth movement is one not of exploration but of remembrance and reflection. While the instruments become increasingly independent, the music seems to relax into itself gradually, achieving a kind of introverted, internal resolution.

The nostalgia of the finale contributes to a sense that the heart of this quintet lies in its painfully beautiful Larghetto. The deep emotional vulnerability of this movement defies explanation and description; from the first statement of the main theme in the clarinet, the music is utterly devoid of pretense, disarmingly transparent in both texture and affect. The music captures Burnham's paradoxical observation of Mozart's "ever renewable, lost innocence" through the juxtaposition of total serenity with overwhelming grief, and achieves a uniquely Mozartian pathos, peaceful yet despairing. Maynard Solomon similarly refers to Mozart's unique and defining ability to capture "... the strange, the terrible, the uncanny, the deadly aspects of beauty".

-Amir Moheimani