

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 Professor of Music at UCSD.

Award-winning violist **Che-Yen Chen** is a founding member of the Formosa Quartet. Upon winning the First-Prize in the 2003 Primrose International Viola Competition, Chen and his quartet won the Grand-Prize of the 2006 London International String Quartet Competition. San Diego Union-Tribune described him as an artist who finds “not just the subtle emotion, but the humanity hidden in the music.” Chen has recorded on EMI, Delos, New World Records, and Aeolian Classics. His recording with the Formosa Quartet, From Hungary to Taiwan, released by Bridge Records, was named “The Best Classical Releases of January 2019” by New York Public Radio WQXR. As an orchestral musician, Chen served as principal violist of the San Diego Symphony and Mainly Mozart Festival Orchestra. He has appeared as guest principal with Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, National Arts Centre Orchestra, and Toronto Symphony Orchestra. As an active performer of solo, chamber and orchestral repertoire, combined with his passion in education, Chen’s expertise in these areas has led him to embark on Formosa Quartet’s cofounding of the Formosa Chamber Music Festival in Taiwan. It is the first intensive chamber music training program of its kind in this island country. Currently, Formosa Quartet serves as the quartet-in-residence with the National Youth Orchestra Canada and the newly inaugurated Taipei Music Academy and Festival. As a former member of Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society’s Bowers Program and a participant of the Marlboro Festival, Chen’s other chamber music projects include Camera Lucida and The Myriad Trio. He has given masterclass across North America and Asia and had served on the faculty of the University of Southern California until 2019. Chen joined UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music as the professor of viola in 2018 as the school celebrates its formal establishment as UCLA’s 12th professional school.

Hailed in New York Concert Review as “... a superb cellist with intense and sensuous sound,” and described by the Los Angeles Times as “... being able to handle the most intricate musical works with unblinking ease and expressive zeal,” cellist **Yao Zshao** performs with a rare and captivating dynamism that has secured him a successful career as the tenured Principal Cello for San Diego Symphony Orchestra, and as a faculty member at San Diego State University. He is one of the founding members of the award-winning Great Wall String Quartet, and in 2013, he was honored as one of China’s Ten Extraordinary Cellists of the Generation. Mr. Zhao made his first concert appearance at age five, and solo debut in the Beijing Concert Hall at age nine. He garnered further attention in 1988 upon winning second prize at the First Chinese National Cello Competition and went on to win more than 13 competitions, awards and honors. His career has seen him performing and teaching in over 40 cities around the world including a successful solo debut at the Weil Recital Hall (Carnegie Hall) in New York. Born in Beijing in 1976, Mr. Zhao began his studies on the cello and piano at the age of four under the instruction of his father, Xuelian Zhao, who is a distinguished cellist. He attended the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing and later in the United States at the Idyllwild Arts Academy and the Thornton School of Music at the University of Southern California, where he studied with renowned pedagogue, Professor Eleonore Schoenfeld.

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Chamber Music Concerts at UC San Diego
 Monday, October 14th, 2019 – 7:30 p.m.
 Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Phantasy for Piano Quartet, H. 94 (1910) Frank Bridge
(1879-1941)

Contrasts for Violin, Clarinet and Piano, Sz. 111 (1938) Béla Bartók
(1881-1945)

- I. Verbunkos (Recruiting Dance)
- II. Pihenő (Relaxation)
- III. Sebes (Fast Dance)

intermission

Piano Quintet in G minor, Op. 57 (1940) Dmitri Shostakovich
(1906-1975)

- I. Prelude: Lento
- II. Fugue: Adagio
- III. Scherzo: Allegretto
- IV. Intermezzo: Lento
- V. Finale: Allegretto

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

Charles Curtis is on leave until January 2020

Frank Bridge: Phantasy for Piano Quartet, H. 94 (1910)

Frank Bridge (1879-1941) is perhaps best known for his mentorship of the renowned 20th-century British composer, Benjamin Britten, who would go on to become a close friend of Shostakovich. In contrast to his slightly older contemporary and countryman Ralph Vaughan Williams, Bridge's musical idiom is decidedly more continental, often betraying the influence of Saint-Saëns, Fauré, and Lekeu (particularly in regards to harmonic color). Britten describes the piano quartet as "Sonorous yet lucid, with clear, clean lines, grateful to listen to and to play. It is the music of a practical musician, brought up in German orthodoxy, but who loved French romanticism and conception of sound—Brahms happily tempered with Fauré." Indeed, in the genre of the Romantic piano quartet, the three quartets of Brahms and the two of Fauré seem to tower over those of all other composers. To his credit, Bridge's quartet is both studious in regards to his predecessors, as well as highly personal in its affect, and deeply inspired in its musical content. The single-movement piece is structured as a kind of compositional improvisation, with one theme simply giving way to the next; new, contrasting themes emerge as the music develops, cycling through a variety of characters: at times wistful and lyrical, at other times pulsating rhythmically with a raw emotional energy, and featuring jagged, syncopated melodies.

Béla Bartók: Contrasts for Violin, Clarinet and Piano, SZ. 111 (1938)

- I. Verbunkos (Recruiting Dance)
- II. Pihenő (Relaxation)
- III. Sebes (Fast Dance)

Bartók's enigmatically titled *Contrasts* comprises a set of three relatively short pieces inspired by Balkan folk music. The Hungarian musicologist Janós Kárpáti notes that the title may refer not to contrasts of affect, but rather contrasts in more elemental features like tempo and pacing, which change dramatically and often in the outer movements. It is also notable that Bartók's instrumentation features three instruments with sharply contrasting timbral properties and technical resources, and all of which are ingeniously used in different ways. (Indeed, at one point an unconventionally-tuned violin is deployed to create a sudden coloristic change.) The virtuosic clarinet writing is particularly noteworthy (though virtuosity is required of all three instruments), as the piece was officially commissioned by the legendary jazz clarinetist Benny Goodman. Bartók integrates folk melodies and rhythms with his own unique approach to harmony and tonality, but he also seems to subtly incorporate elements of jazz, as in the wildly free clarinet solo towards the end of the first movement. Here, as elsewhere, Bartók displays a preternatural gift for seamlessly weaving together elements of disparate musical traditions.

The evocative titles of each movement are perhaps as misleading as the title *Contrasts*: for example, the second movement is less a relaxation than a release of pent-up energy. Although slow and mostly soft, shimmering tremellandi, trills and dramatic dynamic shifts imbue the music with a kind of latent nervous energy. Meanwhile, the outer movements exemplify Bartók's gift for combining rhythm and harmony. Dizzying, foot-stomping, uniquely Bartókian syncopations appear midway through the first movement with the introduction of the second theme

and slowly build toward a raucous climax. Similar rhythms appear again in the middle of the final movement in the form of a strange, mysterious scalar melody, which evaporates magically into an increasingly ambiguous harmonic texture. The ensuing silence is banished by a rhythmically virtuosic closing theme. While generally not as well-known as some of Bartók's other chamber music works, the *Contrasts* have a uniquely rustic charm, in addition to their tremendous technical depth.

Dmitri Shostakovich: Piano Quintet in G minor, Op. 57 (1940)

As with so much of Shostakovich's music, and particularly his chamber music, the piano quintet conveniently lends itself to an autobiographical interpretation. Shostakovich's musical output is often viewed in light of the composer's relationship with Soviet political power and global politics. Beginning with his first denunciation in January of 1936, Shostakovich came under scrutiny from the Soviet composer's union as well as politicians. Stalin attended a performance of Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (which until that point had been lavishly praised by critics) and was reportedly displeased by its subversive and grotesque qualities, as well as its outright vulgarity and salaciousness. Two days later, an anonymous review (rumored to have been written by Stalin himself) appeared in the Soviet newspaper Pravda, which attacked the opera for its "deliberately dissonant, muddled stream of sounds... quacks, hoots, pants, and gasps." Critics who had praised it suddenly recanted, and Shostakovich himself became the victim of attacks and threats by his peers, the press, and party leaders. His income and music suddenly dwindled, all while his wife was pregnant with their first child. Over the next few years Shostakovich's music lost much of its playful, witty exuberance and fecundity, turning instead to a kind of camouflaged subversiveness; an insecure, withdrawn, darkly cynical, half-hearted insincerity emerges. His career recovered, but Shostakovich's music would be forever scarred by the artistic compromises he made in order to survive.

In the piano quintet, Shostakovich achieves his unique voice by the juxtaposition of an almost quaint banality with a stark undertone of bleakness. He seems to perfectly capture the silent, unexpressed anguish of a lone individual impotently contemplating the gloomy atmosphere of a world descending deeper by the day into the depths of chaos and despair, with the world serving as background to his own personal crisis. France and the low countries had fallen to the Nazis in May of that year (three weeks before the birth of Shostakovich's first child), and the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact was signed in June. Shostakovich likely began work on the quintet shortly afterwards, when Soviet politicians and the press had begun openly celebrating the annexation of the Baltic States as a correction of the imperial Russian army's catastrophic failure in the First World War.

Musically, the piano quintet seems to follow the precedent set by Schumann (as opposed to Brahms) in that it prominently features the piano balanced against a string quartet. The first movement opens with a strident concerto-esque piano solo, whose contrapuntal theme juxtaposes three-note ascending and descending scale melodies. The strings, led by the cello, restate the theme with altered harmony, and when the piano re-enters, it forms an almost awkwardly forced dialogue in which unexpected notes trigger a kind of flinching gesture; the composer seems to insecurely distance himself from his own creative impulses out of a reflexive fear, and instead cadences with a retreating gesture. The charmingly lyrical second theme, with its innocently childlike piano melody and viola countermelody, seems to humanize the thematic

material of the stark opening theme, while being occasionally peppered with the same biting, out-of-place melodic and harmonic notes. The movement achieves a harrowing, tragically unsatisfying climax which quotes a slightly altered descending motif from the opening, before slipping back into a recapitulation of the opening.

The second movement opens with a fugue based on a halting, desperate, and barely recognizable version of the first movement's opening theme. The piano is the last instrument to enter, and when it does, it does so in the instrument's lowest register in pianissimo octaves, eerily and morbidly silent. The fugue's austerity and harmonic aimlessness create an atmosphere of inconsolable loneliness, as the music seems to alternate between tepidly expanding and retreating, falling back into itself, toward silence, settling into a kind of deathly sparseness, bleak even by Shostakovich's standards.

Fittingly, Shostakovich's scherzo has all the playful humor of one who is forced to laugh at a back-handed insult. His use of naked repetition becomes a kind of shameful self-parody, particularly in the g-sharp minor second theme, in which the melody becomes perpetually stuck on a single repeated note. The most unique feature of the quartet's five-movement structure is its deathlike fourth movement, paradoxically described in the program as an intermezzo, masquerading as an inconspicuous link between *Scherzo* and *Finale*. The *Finale* is dismissively flippant, brimming with Shostakovich's unmistakable brand of witty neoclassical charm, and forming a kind of protective shell around the quintet. Yet it is the *Intermezzo*, with its deathly quiet, meditative and (for once) unflinching honesty, that lays bare the nihilistic, wounded heart of the entire quintet, scarred by heart-rending loneliness. The music probes some of Shostakovich's most bizarre and disturbing harmonies, quietly nightmarish, surreal enough that one feels they should not even exist.

~Amir Moheimani

Upcoming Camera Lucida 2019-2020 Concert Dates

- December 9, 2019: works by Schumann, Kurtag, Milhaud, and Strauss
- January 13, 2020: works by Mozart, Beethoven, and Rachmaninov
- February 10, 2020: works by Ravel, Beethoven, and Brahms
- April 20, 2020: works by Poulenc, Barber, and Schmidt
- May 18, 2020: works by Debussy, Foote, and Beethoven

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