

camera lucida

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Chamber Music Concerts at UC San Diego

Monday, February 10th, 2020 – 7:30 p.m.

Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

camera lucida

Sonate en quatre parties (1920-1922)
for Violin and Cello

Maurice Ravel
(1875-1937)

Allegro
Très vif
Lent
Vif, avec entrain

String Quartet in c minor, Opus 18 Nr. 4 (1801)

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Allegro ma non tanto
Andante scherzoso quasi Allegretto
Menuetto: Allegro
Allegretto

intermission

Quintet in b minor, Opus 115 (1891)
for Clarinet and String Quartet

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1867)

Allegro
Adagio
Andantino; Presto non assai, ma con sentimento
Con moto

Anthony Burr, clarinet
Jeff Thayer and Hanah Stuart, violins
Che-Yen Chen, viola
Charles Curtis, cello

Machine for Two Instruments

“... [A] *pavilion of imposture...*” (Jankélévitch on Ravel’s house in Monfort-l’Amaury)

During the period in which he was composing the *Sonate en quatre parties* (earlier known simply as the *Duo for Violin and Cello*), Maurice Ravel was moving into the house which would remain his primary residence until his death in 1937. This was no ordinary house: a strange, slightly too small structure, with a peculiar turret perched above a second story which was inaccessible from the first except via an outdoor staircase. The view, however, was spectacular, and the location in the Île-de-France fulfilled Ravel’s fantasy of splendid isolation without removing him too far from Paris. He quickly named the place *Le Belvedere*. While his correspondence from this period provides a number of significant insights into the composition of the Duo, the following is a more representative passage:

“*My drains were stillborn, as the plumber puts it. There is no remedy. This afternoon, a conference with the contractor. One o’clock, and it’s pouring. I must leave you ... armed with my storm lantern I shall reach my bedroom swimming.*”

One of Ravel’s most frequent visitors during the early days at “*Le Belvedere*” was Hélène Jourdan-Morhange, the violinist who premiered both the Duo and its successor, the *Sonata for Violin and Piano*. She later wrote that one

“*had to admire his Japanese lawn made up of thousands of little blue flowers, his dwarf trees... and all the strange plants which had gone towards ‘Japanizing’ his garden. Ravel chose them meticulously, like his harmonies. His love of things Japanese corresponded to his taste for what was precious and perfect. There was even a tiny room in the house full of assorted Japanese objects and he was delighted by his friends’ astonishment when he proudly announced: ‘All this ... is fake!’*”

Ravel, then, lived in this odd playhouse as an eccentric in retreat from the world of concert life, becoming more and more preoccupied with his opera on childhood and magic (*L’enfant et les Sortilèges*), and his own poor health. He became a character not unlike Jean des Esseintes in Huysmans’ *Against Nature*, a book that had been a formative influence earlier in Ravel’s career. Though instead of fancifully mistreating tortoises, he merely kept Siamese cats.

“*The Sonata for Violin and Violoncello was written during the time I was getting settled at Montfort-l’Amaury. I believe that this Sonata marks a turning point in my career. Bareness is here driven to the extreme. Restraint from harmonic charm. More and more an emphatic reversion to the spirit of melody*” (Ravel in his biographical statement).

Translations of this passage substitute various words for “bareness” in place of *dépouillement* in the original. While these other inflections of the word (examination, analysis, reduction etc) are surely apt in reference to this particularly stringent score, Ravel was almost certainly also making reference to the manner in which the word had become a rallying point for the newly ascendent younger composers of “*Les Six*.” “*Les Six*” had been named in 1920, the year Ravel began work on the duo, and favored a “*style dépouillé*” derived from their self-proclaimed master, Erik Satie. Ravel was being toppled from his perch at the vanguard of French music, and a number of critics at the time wrote off the Duo as a misguided attempt to keep abreast of the times.

The work had a tortured genesis. Ravel composed the first movement in 1920 at the request of Henry Prunières, who published it in a

special volume of *La Revue Musicale* dedicated to the memory of the recently deceased Debussy. Others contributing to this volume included Bartók, Stravinsky, Satie and de Falla. Over the course of the next two years, Ravel wrote the remaining three movements and the completed work was premiered in 1922. Letters of the time are peppered with complaints about the difficulty of completing the work. In one he quipped that in the time it took him to write the Duo, Milhaud “would have found a way to compose 4 symphonies, 5 quartets, and several settings of lyric poems by Paul Claudel.”

More than most composers Ravel wore his influences on his sleeve: many works are titled as hommages, or “in the style of,” and he frequently used specific works by other composers as models (for instance, according to Marguerite Long, the slow movement of the Piano Concerto was composed two measures at a time in correspondence with the slow movement of Mozart’s Clarinet Quintet). While the Duo Sonata is dedicated to the memory of Debussy, the music itself, through its extreme reduction, manages to escape any overwhelming single reference. Which is not to say it escapes influence. On the contrary, people have heard echoes of Bartók, Kodály, Debussy, Saint-Saëns, Satie, Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Milhaud in the work. However, the reduction really does seem to have served Ravel as a mechanism for more comprehensively working past his immediate influences and distilling them into something far less legible, subjecting his material to what his biographer H. H. Stueckenschmidt provocatively termed a “process of dematerialization ... apparently encouraged by the splendid isolation of his proprietorship in Monfort-l’Amaury.”

“*It may have an air of nothingness, this machine for two instruments: there is nearly a year and a half of toil in it.*”

A machine for two instruments. All issues of tonality and melody aside, the most striking aspect of the duo is its oddly mechanical nature: constant use of ostinati, lurching *moto perpetuo* implications in both the second and fourth movements, and a plethora of whirring, tapping, sweeping, knocking timbres from the two instruments (pizzicati, brittle left hand pizzicati, high register trills, glissandi, thrumming triple and quadruple stops). Not only does it employ mechanistic formal devices, it seems to echo the sounds of the mechanical, including sheer noise.

Ravel was fascinated with machines, and automata in particular. Many of the trinkets and curios in his house were mechanical. His father was a notable engineer, who held a patent on a kind of steam generator and designed one of the early internal combustion engines. More notably, perhaps, he also designed a celebrated circus showpiece, the “Whirlwind of Death” which featured a car in a loop-the-loop. Ravel grew up around not just the mechanical, but the fantastically mechanical, and the fascination stayed with him his entire life. His brother, who followed in their father’s footsteps, recalled that he

“*admired everything which was mechanical, from dimple tin toys to the most intricate machine tools. He would thus spend entire days in front of street vendors’ stalls, and was delighted to come with me to factories or to expositions of machinery. He was happy to be in the midst of these movements and noises. But he always came out struck and obsessed by the automation of all these machines.*”

In an essay entitled “Finding Tunes in Factories” from 1931, Ravel rhapsodized about the sonorities of the shop floor and fantasized about “the triumph of the machine, the vast monster that man has created to do his bidding. What a noble inspiration!”

In these years, we see the dandyish, sexually ambiguous Ravel, collecting mechanical crickets, wind-up rabbits, warbling nightingale automata, fabricating such odd pieces as this Duo Sonata and the uncanny *Frontispiece*, a series of overlapping ostinati for two pianos, five hands, traveling to trade shows with his engineer brother, as the quintessential Duchampian “bachelor machine.” The “bachelor machine” of Marcel Duchamp’s *Large Glass* went on to become a central if occluded figure in French modernism, through the Surrealists to essays by postwar theorists Michel Carrouges, Michel de Certeau and then Deleuze and Guattari (who deemed Ravel’s *Bolero* “the classic example, almost a caricature, of machinic assemblage”).

Though the duo is dedicated to Debussy, around the time of its premiere Ravel claimed in a newspaper interview that he had “started the reaction against [Debussy] in favor of the classics because I craved more will and intellect than his music contained.” The tribute, then, hews very closely to a condensed sonata form, almost pedantically so in the case of the first movement. The remaining three movements are what one might reasonably expect of a sonata: a scherzo, a slow movement and a kind of Rondo finale.

If formally clear, tonally the work is highly ambiguous. Ravel is right that the concentration is on melody at all costs. A strange, slightly exotic atmosphere prevails. However the exoticism is of an archaic, anachronistic kind, more akin to the Satie of works like *Socrate*, or some half-remembered offshoot of Renaissance counterpoint. The melodic material is predominantly modal, and while it occasionally feels pentatonic, it never really is. None of the usual glib exotic, orientalist tonal flourishes are here (no whole tone scales à la Debussy, no octatonic scales à la Stravinsky). If there is exoticism in this work, its object is jazz.

Much has been made of the jazz influence on Ravel’s later works, and this one is no exception. His purported take on “the blues” is less directly depicted here than in the follow-up Sonata for Violin and Piano, but is no less present. At first blush, the reference is pretty straight-forward: alternation/superimposition of major and minor thirds within a harmony, and the frequent use of a flat seventh scale degree. A number of commentators have commented that actual blues harmony or progressions are absent, generally because they felt Ravel to have “improved” upon them. However, it is worth considering that the jazz he was hearing in the Paris of the early 1920s was still most likely Dixieland-derived and highly contrapuntal. Rather than form, or harmonic feeling, or even melody, what may have inspired Ravel the most from jazz was a different sense of counterpoint, of the combination of rhythmically supple instrumental melodies (or even simultaneously discrepant versions of the same melody) in a way that gave rise to novel combinations, including dissonances that were non-functional, almost accidental, but no less beautiful and striking for that.

The first movement opens with the major/minor (blues connoting?) motif, which runs through the entire work: the violin outlines an arpeggiated figure in A minor ascending, A major

descending, turning on a flat seventh. Against it, the cello plays the opening theme, a modal melody in A dorian. The restatement occurs with the parts switched and centered in D rather than A. In many other passages the mode of the melody is at odds with the implied root of the harmony, as for instance at the opening of the finale where we are clearly in C (crunched out open strings and all), but the melody feels just as clearly in D dorian.

Alongside this ambiguous modal feeling, the Duo also contains a number of passages of striking chromaticism. Frequently these are discussed in terms of the then fashionable theory of bitonality elaborated by Milhaud, and, in a number of places (in the Scherzo particularly) the two parts are notated with different key signatures. However, the most wrenching chromaticism in the Duo has nothing to do with bitonality, or seemingly tonality at all. The transition material between the two thematic areas of the first movement (which recurs in the last movement) and the development section of the slow movement consist of melodic fragments built from major 7ths and minor 9ths that range freely across the gamut. It is no secret that Ravel, while profoundly turned off by Schoenberg’s Germanicism and his compositional technique (the chamber symphony was “not music but a laboratory”), was a great admirer of *Pierrot Lunaire*, in particular. Indeed, the Parisian premiere of *Pierrot* took place during the time Ravel was composing the Duo, and the inverted statement of the chromatic transition theme in the last movement is likely as close as he would ever get to Schoenberg’s serial technique. However, another work of German expressionism may just as easily be read as a significant influence. During one of his Paris sojourns from *Le Belvedere* (perhaps escaping the plumber), Ravel saw Murnau’s film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, and was highly impressed, writing to Georgette Marnold that “Now I have seen the art of the film for the first time.” Think not only of the anguished affect, but also the studied grotesquerie of Murnau’s film, which must have been to Ravel’s liking, considering his admiration for Huysmans and Poe alongside his considerable collection of curios. Further, the presentation of phrases within the duo, while formally elegant, is certainly clipped and abrupt, sometimes more akin to montage, especially with respect to the relationship between the instrumental parts. Rather than smoothly intertwined melodic counterpoint, or overlapping fugal answers, we get sudden shifts: the violin plays an accompanying passage while the cello plays the “melody”, then suddenly they reverse roles, almost akin to the reverse shot practice of editing dialogue in classical Hollywood films.

Despite its modesty of means, we must take seriously Ravel’s assertion that the Duo marked a significant turning point in his compositional style. Other than the opera *L’enfant et les Sortilèges*, it is hard to find another work which so preoccupied him during its genesis, or one in which he gave voice to so many of his most eccentric tendencies as a composer. It must, therefore, have been somewhat disappointing that the initial public response was not particularly favorable—many of the audience were apparently so taken aback by the strangeness of the language and the novelty of the virtuoso instrumental writing that they assumed a poor performance was the cause for their discomfort. Ravel, though, seems to have taken it all with his usual sly humor. From a letter to Hélène Jourdan-Morhange, just after the premiere:

“It seems that the first performance, according to what I presumably said — I’ve never been told to whom — was a ‘massacre’ ... Moreover, I have

learned of my departure for Africa and of my forthcoming marriage—I don't know which of these events is supposed to precede the other...

Later in the same letter, while proposing a date for a second performance, he notes:

"I won't be able to be present at the new 'massacre.' If you don't see me Tuesday evening, don't attribute my absence to any other reason."

~Anthony Burr

Beethoven String Quartet in c minor, Op. 18 Nr. 4

A contemporary observer noted that Beethoven's Opus 18 quartets "must be played often and very well, as they are very difficult to perform and not at all popular." Probably what was meant by the word "popular" was something like "easy to understand" or "easy to digest," like a popular song or popular literature, or "pop culture" – whatever that might have been in 1802. *Singspiel?* Zither music at *Heurigen?* Comedy and *Schuplattler?* Well, these Opus 18 quartets are not that at all. Indeed, they aspire to a height of seriousness that is almost difficult to take seriously. One has to wonder if there is not an element of irony in Beethoven's pathos – especially in Opus 18 Nr. 4. We all know that c-minor is Beethoven's gothic key. And in the early period we have the Piano Trio Opus 1 Nr. 3, the String Trio Opus 9 Nr. 3, and the "Pathétique" Sonata Opus 13, all sharing the same dark, surging tonality. In our string quartet the sense is not of melancholy or gloom, but of a sort of throbbing energy driving from – or to – some exciting and dangerous place; a wildness even. Actually we want to go there! Maybe it's not so dangerous after all, let's see. This quartet foregoes the usual slow movement, replacing it with a strangely clock-like *Andantino scherzoso*. The mechanical repetitions yield from time to time to human, all-to-human syncopations and lyrical ornaments. It is the *Menuetto* which takes us further into the gothic, its weird chromaticism and insistent off-beat *sforzandi* hinting at supernatural realms. As if to heighten the sense of danger, Beethoven tells the performers to take the *da capo* at a faster tempo – hurry! or you might not get out in time! And faster yet is the *Finale* and its *Prestissimo* coda, an unusual example of Beethoven trying out the "gipsy" style. All in all, one wonders if Beethoven himself was not aiming for a "popular" work – certainly he spared no effort on effect. But artists often have a completely different sense of what they are doing from anyone else.

~Charles Curtis

Brahms and Meloncholy

The beginnings of Romanticism might be traced to the troubadours, poet-singers from southern France in the 1200s who invented romantic love in song. Their songs depict the sadness and longing of their love for distant, idealized ladies. The love was unrequited, consummation unattainable. The ladies were far above their station. The pain of separation, the yearning for the visible but unreachable beloved, was intrinsic to the enterprise. Courtly love existed always in a situation of impossibility: unrealizable, forever ideal and unresolvable, and therefore inexhaustible. Desire, extending, could be sung, and could continue through its being sung. Without the impossibility, there would be no song.

Song was also the dominant genre of the Romantic era (in music, generally identified as 1830 to 1900). Brahms wrote more than 200 songs, and Schubert over 600 – in the year that he was 18, his song production averaged out to more than one song every three days. But the spirit of song extended beyond vocal music. In instrumental music, chromatic ornamentation, portamento and rubato imitated the techniques of operatic singing. Mendelssohn's most popular piano compositions were *Songs Without Words* (originally titled "*Romances for Piano*"), eight cycles of parlour music pieces published throughout his lifetime that took advantage of the singing quality of the piano, its longer sustain compared to earlier keyboard instruments. There is a singing quality that seems to stretch over Romantic music as a whole. The opening phrase of Brahms' Clarinet Quintet, Op. 115, for example, seems incapable of ending. Each segment rolls over into the next, flowing as in an ocean of interrelated, overlapping motives, beginning again and again. The movement of waves seems oblivious to breath.

Paradoxically, the specter of endless singing is embodied in the quintessentially Romantic form of the fragment – a piece projecting beyond its own borders. Romantic phrases do not close, but open up to new possibilities. The fragment implies something greater than what can be witnessed. The Romantic interest in fragments and ruins responded, in part, to the rediscovery of the art of classical antiquity – finding ancient marbles enigmatic in their decay. In addition, the French and American revolutions, the attendant breakages of ancient systems, and developments in science and technology led to social and political upheavals, the decline of rationalizing Enlightenment views of nature, and an aesthetic shift away from classical ideals of balance, harmony, and perfection. The fragment does not provide a whole and uplifting experience of beauty – it invites the perceiver to reach further.

This reaching for the beyond resonates with the image of the Romantic artist alone in nature, awed by its force and scale, wrestling with forces larger than what can be comprehended – with individual, visionary, mystical experience. Percy Bysshe Shelley's ode 'Mont Blanc: Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni', written during his journey through the Chamonix Valley in 1816, compares the mountain to the human imagination in its remote and inaccessible power, which can be both destructive and creative.

It was composed under the immediate impression of the deep and powerful feelings excited by the objects which it attempts to describe: and as an undisciplined Overflowing of the soul, rests its claim to approbation on an attempt to imitate the untamable wildness and inaccessible solemnity from which those feelings sprang

- Shelley, on the writing of 'Mont Blanc'

Caspar David Friederich's painting *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog* (1818) is a similarly iconic Romantic image that depicts the same scene. A lone figure stands before a wild landscape of dark, craggy peaks and roiling clouds, his back to the viewer. We cannot see his face. But the mountains of the horizon point straight into his heart. The landscape comes to suggest his interior state, the unknown inner shores of his soul, which fog covers and blurs.

Most hospitable to fog were Romantic gardens, which became

wilder, more unruly. Picturesque gardens often included rustic cottages and Gothic ruins as points of interest. The form of the ruin was aestheticized, as a fragment; in particular, a fragment that extends across time, pointing toward a previous epoch of greater grandeur. Physical incompleteness and the trace of the past conjured an aura of mystery. Frederic Chopin's piano preludes were born ruins. Named after introductory pieces to multi-movement works (namely J. S. Bach's expansive collection of preludes and fugues), they point to an earlier historical form, but introduce nothing. Like the preludes of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, there are 24, one in each key. None is longer than 90 measures. Robert Schumann wrote admiringly of them: "... these are sketches, the beginning of studies, or, if you will, ruins, eagles' feathers, all disorder and wild confusions..."

* * *

There is a quality that continues, that desires to continue, even on the scale of a single sound. The Romantic singing line lives in the sustain, the sound that continues. Bowed string instruments are particularly suited to sustaining. Their mechanism (horse hairs against steel-wound gut) is friction. Strings are born of tension. One sees and hears the effort of playing, the pressing of bow to string, the pushing and pulling. By contrast, a harp, plucked, vibrates in grace. The finger moves and releases; the note hangs in the air, effortlessly bloomed. A violinist must maintain effort, sustain longing. There is something unresolved in the essence of its timbre. The arm must follow and continue to exert itself.

The clarinet is a shadow instrument, its tone often called "dark" or "autumnal." A flute may produce the purest tone, but the air hitting the lip of the mouthpiece creates a characteristic "silvery" sound – breath, or breathiness, is audible. With the clarinet, the vibrating reed is hidden in the musician's mouth. Its sound is more internal – even immaterial. Breath is invisible. Sound moves without footsteps. It rolls on like fog. Some brilliance in the clarinet repertoire notwithstanding (flashy runs in Weber or Stamitz, Gershwin's famous provocative opening smear), the clarinet is at heart a stealth instrument, an expert at hiding. Its tone can be inveterately private, seeming to soften and retreat even as it carries the main voice. Mozart and Brahms found this aspect of the clarinet in their late work; Morton Feldman, early. Brahms' late clarinet works – the Trio, Quintet, and two Sonatas – were written for Richard Mühlfeld of the Meiningen Court Orchestra, recommended to Brahms by his pupil and friend Elisabeth von Herzogenberg. The Quintet was written as the composer approached age 60 and his closest friends were dying – Herzogenberg was stricken by heart disease as he wrote, and she died the year after its completion in 1891.

* * *

The Baroque doctrine of affections, derived from classical theories of rhetoric, held that the motivic origin of a composition was an embodiment of affect, an emotional or spiritual state of being. For example, a lamenting bass line descending by half steps represented sadness, while rapidly rising thirds embodied euphoria. A single piece should aim at one affect, the doctrine held. The rest of the work was derived by elaboration. Affects were not personal, but representations of states of the soul as objective reality.

Romantic expression of emotion was more individual. In music, greater expressivity came in part through the expansion of timbre, harmony, and form. Advances in instrumental technology increased the instruments of the symphony orchestra, expanded their range, improved their projection. Musicians explored new playing techniques. Unfamiliar sounds came into play. In addition, harmonic conventions loosened. In Baroque and Classical music, non-harmonic tones came in passing as expressive dissonances that reinforced cadences. In Romantic music, resolutions were delayed. Composers modulated to more remote keys with less preparation. The path from any given moment or state to the next blurred – implied directions could be many, the next step more difficult to predict. Harmony became a means to explore color. Things did not resolve.

In the absence of resolution, melodies gained time to get lost. They grew longer, and less regularly shaped, like the foliage of the new landscape gardens. Fences disappeared, paths curved, lines of trees became clusters, and rectangular ponds lost their corners. Winding paths linked scattered plantings. Grass grew up to the doors of the country house.

Background similarly presses forward, winding its way into the fore, in Albrecht Dürer's engraving of Melancholy from 1514, overcrowded with allegoric imagery. The angel is surrounded by instruments, geometric shapes, and seemingly non sequitur objects: bones, a magic square, bell, hourglass, measuring scale, compass, saw, polyhedron and ball, ascending ladder, starving dog, and a curled cherub. The clutter of the background looms forward, threatening to take over the frame. There is a heaviness accumulated from the density of visual information, each item weighty with symbolic meaning. In the disorder of objects, resembling a junkyard or consignment shop, the face of the angel is nearly lost. She seems submerged in the weight of her skirts and the thicket of her surroundings. The expression on her face is difficult to read in its darkness. In terms of composition, the polyhedron seems to take up more space and attention than her visage, due to the puzzling irregularity of its shape, and its striking flatness in a picture crammed with varied textures. The ball and the starving dog are also more clearly delineated and better lit than the angel. Still, amidst the tangle of leafy wreath, tousled hair, and cascading wing feathers, the whites of her eyes shine bright. Her gaze focuses resolutely on something outside the frame. She is alert. Melancholy can be seen as a state of absorption into an overwhelming abundance.

Brahms' music, teeming with dense counterpoint, cross-rhythms, dovetailing accompaniments, also bears a sense of heaviness. As in the engraving, the proliferation of background figuration creates fullness and weight, which is furthered by extended phrases, delayed cadences and the orchestration of close intervals in low registers. In the second movement of Brahms' Quintet for Clarinet and Strings (Adagio), a small wobbling triplet accompaniment works its way into the three-note falling motive of the melody, turning, expanding, lengthening into a scale. At the cadenza-like *Piu lento*, it accelerates into runs and spreads into arpeggios, a Baroque ornament grown more ornate in the main voice, and a series of driving tremolos in the accompaniment, suggestive of an operatic recitative or a gypsy outcry. The spinning ornament returns in the *Presto scherzo* section of the third movement, where strings and clarinet trade fast, florid falls. Despite its tendency to heaviness, the music is energized by triadic

leaps and driving rhythms.

An unexpected restraint covers the last movement of the Brahms Quintet. After a piece full of delays and interruptions, the outward-pushing, prolonging impulse is hemmed in, and the movement is neatly divided into sixteen-bar variations, each of which takes on a relatively consistent figuration pattern. The movement, disciplined and somber in comparison to the expansive exhilaration of earlier *finales*, like those of the Piano Quartets in A-major or g-minor, seems to circumvent the issue of ending by replacing a last movement with a middle one – and also reflects Brahms' later preoccupation with terse formal structures: the short piano pieces, Op. 115-118 (Intermezzos, Rhapsodies, Capriccios), are often as ambiguous harmonically as Chopin's preludes.

The little piece is exceptionally melancholic and 'to be played very slowly' is not an understatement. Every bar and every note must sound like a ritard[ando], as if one wanted to suck melancholy out of each and every one, lustily and with pleasure out of these very dissonances! Good Lord, this description will [surely] awaken your desire!

- Brahms to Clara Schumann (1893), on Intermezzo Op. 119

* * *

In *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Robert Burton writes on music as a remedy for illness:

... it is a sovereign remedy against despair and melancholy, and will drive away the devil himself. Canus, a Rhodian fiddler, in Philostratus, when Apollonius was inquisitive to know what he could do with his pipe, told him, 'That he would make a melancholy man merry, and him that was merry much merrier than before, a lover more enamoured, a religious man more devout.'

String music was long supposed to be a cure for melancholy. But it would also seem to feed and even intensify it. Duke Orsino, madly in love with a wealthy and resistant lady, begins Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night":

If music be the food of love, play on. / Give me excess of it; that surfeiting, / The appetite may sicken, and so die.

Ghosts crowd around Romantic music as densely as the array of motley instruments surrounding Dürer's angel, its aura thickly laden with written and oral traditions of music-makers past, images associated through its use in film and advertisements, its legacy in other music popular and obscure, past listenings in personal and public history overlaying present experience, amalgamating into an object worthy of absorption. The music might instill melancholy as state of absorption. Excess need not sicken the appetite. It can sustain and grow. We can become addicted to singing, and the singing can continue.

Wealthy 19th century estate owners sometimes paid hermits to inhabit their property.

~Carolyn Chen

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. Previously, Ms. Stuart was 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's unique talents led her to off-Broadway in the spring of 2012 where she starred as Young Erica Morini in The Morini Strad alongside of Mary Beth Peil and Michael Laurence. Media appearances include features on Harmony Films' documentary *The Road to Carnegie Hall*; CBS's *The Early Show*; 2009 Kronberg Academy's Abschlusskonzert der Meisterschüler (Kronberg, Germany); an internationally broadcast performance for Keshet Eilon's Gala Concert in Tel Aviv, Israel; features on WGN, HBO, MTV, SpikeTV's Gamehead and G4 at E3 Summer 2007 with her band, *Corporeal*; 2006 Academy Award-nominated documentary, *Rehearsing a Dream*; and numerous NPR broadcast performances since 2002. 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.

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 the Mainly Mozart Festival Orchestra.

He has appeared as guest principal with the 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 Browsers Program and a participant of the Marlboro Festival, Chen's other chamber music projects include Camera Lucida and the Myriad Trio. He has given masterclasses 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.

Cellist **CHARLES CURTIS** has been Professor of Music at UC San Diego 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 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*.

Anthony Burr has worked across a broad spectrum of the contemporary musical landscape as clarinetist, composer and producer. Recent albums include the premiere recording of Alvin Lucier's *So You...* (Hermes, Orpheus, Eurydice), a disc of chamber music by Lucier and Morton Feldman co-produced with Charles Curtis, a third album by The Clarinets (a collaborative trio with Chris Speed and Oscar Noriega) and *Breath of Light Remains*, a collaboration with Australian band Primitive Motion. He is Professor of Music at UC San Diego.

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