

upcoming concerts

april 3 (wednesday)

beethoven: variations for piano trio on "ich bin der schneider kakadu"
mozart: string quintet k. 406 in c minor
faure: piano quartet in c minor

may 14 (tuesday)

mozart: string quintet in b-flat k. 174
bach: brandenburg concerto no. 5
beethoven: quartet in a minor, opus 132

artistic director - charles curtis

executive coordinator - colin mcallister

program notes - charles cross

recording engineer - tom erbe

production - jessica flores

tonight's concert will be broadcast saturday, march 16th at 9 pm on
kpbs-fm 89.5 or streaming at kpbs.org

for more information:

<http://www.camerLucidachambermusic.org>

we now have an official camera lucida kpbs email address for
listener questions or comments!
cameralucida@kpbs.org

Cellist **Charles Curtis** has been Professor for Contemporary Music Performance 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. He holds the Piatigorsky Prize of the New York Cello Society, and received prizes in the Naumburg, Geneva, Cassado and Viña del Mar (Chile) international competitions. He has appeared as soloist with the San Francisco Symphony, the National Symphony, the Baltimore Symphony, the Symphony Orchestra of Berlin, the NDR Symphony, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the Orquestra de la Maggio Musicale in Florence, the Janacek Philharmonic, as well as orchestras in 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, Éliane Radigue, Alvin Lucier, Alison Knowles and Mieko Shiomi as well as rarely-heard compositions by Terry Jennings, Richard Maxfield, Cornelius Cardew, Christian Wolff, Morton Feldman and John Cage. Curtis is artistic director of San Diego's Camera Lucida chamber music ensemble and concert series.

Reiko Uchida was born in Torrance, California and is a graduate of the Curtis Institute, Mannes College of Music, and the Juilliard School. Her recording String Poetic with Jennifer Koh, was nominated for a 2008 Grammy Award. She has performed concertos with the LA Philharmonic, and the Santa Fe, Greenwich, and Princeton symphonies. As a chamber musician, she has played at the Marlboro, Santa Fe, Tanglewood and Spoleto music festivals and has collaborated with Anne Akiko Meyers, Thomas Meglitoranza, Sharon Robinson, Jaime Laredo, as well as the Borromeo, St. Lawrence and Tokyo string quartets. As a youngster, she performed on The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson. She is a past member of Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center Two and studied with Claude Frank, Leon Fleisher, Edward Aldwell, Sophia Rosoff and Margo Garrett. Ms. Uchida currently lives in New York City where she is an associate faculty member at Columbia University.

camera lucida

chamber music concerts at uc san diego

2012-2013 season

sponsored by the sam b. ersan chamber music fund

monday, march fourth
two thousand and thirteen
7:30pm

Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor, Op. 25

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Allegro

Intermezzo: Allegro

Andante con moto

Rondo alla Zingarese: Presto

intermission

Piano Quartet No. 2 in A major, Op. 26

Johannes Brahms

Allegro non troppo

Poco Adagio

Scherzo: Poco Allegro

Finale: Allegro

Jeff Thayer, violin
Che-Yen Chen, viola
Charles Curtis, cello
Reiko Uchida, piano



 UC San Diego | Department of Music



A Brahms Diptych

Pairing the works of a single composer on one program affords listeners and musicians alike a sharpened focus on that composer’s creative world. Rarer yet is the opportunity to experience two works of a single composer, of the same medium and form, composed in direct chronological proximity to one another. Here we are granted access to an extended moment in one composer’s output. There are only a handful of such examples that can actually function as concert programs. Beethoven’s Fifth and Sixth symphonies carry adjacent opus numbers, Opp. 67 and 68, and he worked on them simultaneously; and his final piano sonatas form the famous triplet of Opp. 109, 110 and 111. In the world of chamber music, we find the sublime duality of Mozart’s String Quintets in C major and g minor, K. 515 and 516; after the forthright and heroic C major, Mozart felt compelled to proceed into the haunted, night-lit realms of the g-minor. With this unprecedented pairing of emotional opposites Mozart initiated the Romantic idea of the musical work as a window into the inner life of the composer, the composer himself the subject matter of his own creative process. Schubert’s two Piano Trios, Opp. 99 and 100, though not as intimately linked in their composer’s work life, show a related interest in expanding upon one medium, an urge to exhaustively explore the resources laid out on the workbench, so to speak, before moving on to other forms.

Brahms would have been aware of all these precedents; and in any event it was his habit, in the early period before his move to Vienna, to work in multiples of a medium - the two orchestral Serenades, the two String Sextets, the numerous sets of variations, the many choral works. But with the two Piano Quartets Opp. 25 and 26 we have perhaps the first answer to Mozart’s String Quintet pairing, and arguably the first two unequivocal successes in Brahms’ handling of large-scale sonata structure. In these two works, which Brahms evidently worked on in tandem over a period of years, and which were both completed by the 28-year-old composer in 1861, we hear the young master taking complete control of his craft, drawing equally on the tradition which he venerated and on the mysterious sources of originality and newness which are the mark of genius. Here an extended moment in one composer’s creative journey is at the same time his breakthrough into a domain of his own - Brahms becoming Brahms.

A diptych is strictly speaking a pair of panel paintings hinged together such that when opened out as a pair of wings, a single image is completed over the two sides. The conceit of these two great Piano Quartets forming a musical diptych relies on the question of whether we consider them as completing one another. This question we would hope to find answered in live performance, in the immediate confrontation with the work of art as a living organism projected through the prism of interpretation. And by extension, the meaning of these works to us is also only discoverable through active listening in concert. The interpretation of music - beyond its evident and copious gifts of pleasure, emotional refreshment and inspiration - also provides a critical lens, magnifying the work both in its context and in ours, commenting and elaborating on where we are and who we are in our relationship to history and to a shared cultural past.

•••

If we imagine Brahms in fact looking back to Mozart’s Quintet pairing, which is highly likely, then we see in Brahms’ response the sides of the diptych reversed: beginning in g minor (Opus 25), and then moving up one whole step to the sunnier, more gently lyrical key of A major (Opus 26). One could imagine a double diptych of the two Mozart Quintets and the two Brahms Quartets, symmetrically arranged, with the two inner panels in g minor, and the outer panels reflecting a strikingly Schubertian modulation from C major to the major submediant, A major. But this is idle speculation. Within Brahms’ own diptych, the two works draw upon different threads of the Romantic tradition, and exhibit more differences than similarities. The similarities - beyond instrumentation and four-movement

an integral vocal quality in both the string and piano writing; absolute interchangeability of material between all instruments (this is definitely not a feature of earlier chamber music for piano and strings); and recurring hints of so-called gipsy-inflected material, culminating in the *alla Zingarese* finale of Opus 25. The differences are more subtle and variegated: atmospheric, dramaturgical, evocational. Whereas the g minor summons up a Gothic world of hushed melancholy and furtive suspense, the A major opens into the reassuring surroundings of the shared, the social and the domestic.

But in fact both works traverse, perhaps in a pattern of reciprocity, the two sides of Brahms’ psyche: the melancholic-solitary, and the amiable and warmly affectionate. Both sides pivot on the extraordinary circumstance of his lifelong yearning for an inaccessible happiness, his love for Clara Schumann. Like a mediaeval knight, Brahms held steadfastly to an idealized love for the Lady he could never possess, his forbearance a spur to greater and more profound love. And this is the diptych of Brahms’ persona, closed to the world in his personal sphere, but unfolded for universal display in the sublimated form of his music.

•••

Opus 25 seems to gather force and momentum over its entire length. The leanness of the opening material builds through extension, not mass; tiny motivic elements, sometimes no more than a two-note sequence, are spun out exhaustively in combinatorial patterns. The beautiful coda sets a spiderweb-like *barriolage* figure in the violin against triplet ornaments in the piano; a final surging up of the opening theme promises massiveness, but recedes to a quiet exit. The Intermezzo, ornate and detailed, presents a quietly restless, writhing texture, opening to the cautious ebullience of the Trio. The slow movement builds further: not, as is usual, a period of restraint or rest in the larger form of the work, but effusive, an outpouring, full-throated. One imagines a group of impassioned singers surrounding the youthful Brahms at the piano, holding forth for all they were worth. The middle section, at first like a military fanfare in the distance, escalates to truly symphonic scale and massiveness. And the finale is utter frenzy; when it seems it can go no further, the piano plunges via a cadenza-like descent into sudden silence, as if the dancer had collapsed in exhaustion; gradually revived by the ministrations of the strings, the movement ends once more in wild affirmation.

Brahms’ emulation of Beethoven is evident in the careful curating of motivic development as a kind of self-replication, self-formation, the blossoming of sonata form as an organic emergence from an internal source. This drama of *becoming* is captured by the untranslatable German concept of *Bildung*. But we must not forget the drama of atmosphere and texture which Brahms took from Chopin, or from Chopin via Schumann. The Intermezzo in particular lives in an imagined world of aristocratic dance and chivalry, where rank is bestowed on the basis of charm and the exactly appropriate dosage of *rubato*.

•••

Opus 26 begins in an aspect of quiet contentment, the piano’s hymn-like chords setting the background to a simple melodic elaboration in the cello, stationary, in no hurry to go anywhere in particular. Immediately the roles are reversed, the strings restate the chordal introit with a sound reminiscent of ancient consort music, and the piano gently embarks on one of those characteristically Brahmsian melodies that does not want to stop, extending bar for bar and modulation for modulation, longing for eternity. When the recapitulation finally wraps its way around again, the piano’s hymn sounds an octave lower, a sign, perhaps, of even greater devotion, humility, groundedness. The touching Poco adagio sets up a lilting, pulsing rhythm of the utmost tenderness; fantasia-like diminished chord arpeggiations lead to stabbing outbursts of emotion, subsiding again. The scherzo is all innocence, sequences of circular melodies in unison, the high violin a sort of whistling overtone. The Trio section sets up a tidy canon, almost a game of tag; the atmosphere is one of idealized childlikeness, playfulness, a musical analog to genre depictions of cherubs and angels at play with flutes and

harps. The Finale again draws on the vehemence of eastern European and gipsy folk music; with the accented appoggiaturas lending a spicy, wrong-note raucousness to the texture, we are again in an imagined dance hall where a dizzying potpourri of dances - *verbunkos*, galop, can-can - seem to alternate with only the merest of intervallic threads linking them. The work finally opens outward to unrestrained, unconcealed joy, a tableau of celebration.

about the performers

Violinist **Jeff Thayer** is currently the concertmaster of the San Diego Symphony as well as concertmaster and faculty member of the Music Academy of the West (Santa Barbara). Previous positions include assistant concertmaster of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, associate concertmaster of the North Carolina Symphony, 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. Through a generous loan from Irwin and Joan Jacobs and the Jacobs’ Family Trust, Mr. Thayer plays on the 1708 “Sir Bagshawe” Stradivarius.

Taiwanese-American violist **Che-Yen Chen** has established himself as an active performer and educator. He is a founding member of the Formosa Quartet, recipient of the First-Prize and the Amadeus Prize winner of the 10th London International String Quartet Competition. Since winning the First-Prize in the 2003 William Primrose International Viola Competition and the “President Prize” of the Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition, Chen has been described by the Strad Magazine as a musician whose “tonal distinction and essential musicality produced an auspicious impression” and 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.” Principal violist of the San Diego Symphony and Mainly Mozart Festival Orchestra, Chen has appeared as guest principal violist with Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and Canada’s National Arts Centre Orchestra.He is a member of Camera Lucida, Concertante Chamber Players and The Myriad Trio, which just released its debut album “The Eye of Night”. Summer of 2013 will commence the inaugural year for the Formosa Quartet’s Formosa Chamber Music Festival in Taiwan.