

# *camera lucida*

Chamber music concerts at UC San Diego

2013-2014 season

Sponsored by the Sam B. Ersan Fund at the San Diego Foundation

Monday, February Third  
Two Thousand and Fourteen  
7:30pm

Piano Trio in E Major, KV542

*Allegro*

*Andante grazioso*

*Allegro*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-91)

Sonata for Viola and Piano

*Impetuoso*

*Vivace*

*Adagio*

Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979)

intermission

Trio for Piano, Clarinet, and Cello in A minor, op. 114

*Allegro*

*Adagio*

*Andantino grazioso*

*Allegro*

Johannes Brahms (1833-97)

Anthony Burr, clarinet

Jeff Thayer, violin

Che-Yen Chen, viola

Charles Curtis, cello

Reiko Uchida, piano

## Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart—Trio for Piano, Violin, and Cello in E Major, KV 542

The last quarter of the 18th Century in Vienna saw a bloom of *Hausmusik*—chamber pieces written for the performance and delectation of cultivated amateurs. These works took many forms, but notable among them was the piano trio—whose early examples featured advanced keyboard parts with rudimentary violin and cello accompaniment, making them particularly useful for domestic music-making. While numerous composers worked in the medium, the trios of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven have assumed a central role in the repertoire due to their scope and substance. Mozart's trios, in particular, raised the violin and cello from a subservient role to an equal *concertante* footing with the piano. Further, Mozart's trios show above all a subtle stylistic virtuosity that makes clear that while his chamber works may have been published for amateurs, this is music written with the cognoscenti in mind. His trios are laden with details aimed at the savviest tastes and attention, and, importantly, they require a knowing performer. A contemporary critic noted, "Many another piece keeps some countenance even when indifferently performed, but this product of Mozart's can in truth hardly bear listening to when it falls into mediocre amateurish hands and is negligently played. What a difference when this much-advertised work of art is performed with the highest degree of accuracy [...] in a quiet room where the suspension of every note cannot escape the listening ear, and in the presence of only two or three attentive persons!"

KV 542 dates from 1788, a year of extraordinary productivity for Mozart, during which he finished the last three piano trios and the final three symphonies. The key of E Major, usually reserved for exotic topical moments in his operas, is rarely used in Mozart's chamber music. From the outset, the work demands, and rewards, carefully listening: a sudden diminuendo cloaks a chromatic descent, the exact pitches of which can be found in the first theme, the accompaniment to the second theme, the closing theme, and the development. The genteel triple meter makes the numerous moments of startling harmonies and a game of extended phrase-lengths almost imperceptible, and contributes a pastoral quality that has invited comparison of this movement to the idylls of Watteau. The second movement *Andante grazioso* is a French rondo, a form Mozart was fond of early in his life, here marked by the imitation and counterpoint characteristic of his late music. The third movement, which returns to the same descending semitones that marked the first movement—growing more vigorous with each episode—is by turns amiable and brilliant, with extended solo passages for the piano and violin.

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## Rebecca Clarke—Sonata for Viola and Piano

The music of British composer Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979), ignored for decades, has enjoyed a certain renaissance since the late 1970s. Since that time, her work, which consists largely of songs and chamber music, has appeared with greater frequency in both concert hall and classroom and been the focus of a growing scholarly interest. Clarke was born in England to an American father and German mother. She showed an interest in music at an early age and studied violin briefly at the Royal Academy of Music, and later became the first female composition student at the Royal College of Music under Sir Charles Villiers Stanford. At the Royal College, she sang in the Palestrina Society Choir, an ensemble with which Holst and Vaughan Williams tested many of their vocal arrangements. Her work, like that of many composers in the first half of the 20th Century, wrestles with the project of weaving an assorted collection of then "new" compositional materials and methods—non-western scales and modes, new rhythmic organization, new timbres and articulations, and a high degree of expressive chromaticism—into a coherent and personal style.

Much of Clarke's music remains unpublished. In the music that has found its way into the repertoire, the viola (Clarke's main instrument—to which she switched from violin at the encouragement of Stanford) is prominent, and she wrote numerous pieces for viola and piano. In this collection the Sonata for Viola and Piano is perhaps her most familiar piece. Begun in Honolulu in 1918, the Sonata was entered the following year in a competition hosted by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. Clarke's work tied for first place with a suite for viola and piano by Ernest Bloch. The news that this illustrious work had been composed by a woman invited, on the one hand, the biting suggestion by some that Clarke could not be the real composer and on the other, an offer of publication by J.W. Chester, the highest professional accolade of Clarke's career at that time.

The first movement *Impetuoso* is in a detailed sonata structure, and shows numerous influences—some predictable, other less so: comparisons with Debussy and Ravel are ubiquitous, fostered by Clarke's attachment, as a preface to the piece, of two lines by the French poet Alfred De Musset:

*Poète, prends ton luth; le vin de la jeunesse  
Fermente cette nuit dans les veines de Dieu.*

Poet, take up your lute; the wine of youth  
this night is fermenting in the veins of God.

No less important an influence is the passionate and improvised mood of the work of Bloch, whose work Clarke surely knew and studied before tying him in the Coolidge competition. The dancing, ternary scherzo, marked *vivace*, owes much to the scherzo of Ravel's 1914 Piano Trio, especially the use of extended guitar-like pizzicato gestures, glissandi, and luminous harmonics; these are combined and contrasted with lower register insistent declamatory folk melody. The third movement is the longest, most emotionally complex of the three. Beginning with a languorous, massive—and almost autonomous—slow section, it features a solo piano recitative above a tremolo sustained bass note in the viola before embarking on an extended and fantastical reworking of themes from the first movement. This extended and detailed structure shows a remarkable command of the sonorous and expressive resources of both piano and viola.

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### **Johannes Brahms—Trio for Piano, Clarinet, and Cello in A minor, op. 114**

In 1890, just after finishing the String Quintet in G, op. 111, Brahms announced his retirement from composing. He was jolted out of this short-lived hiatus by the clarinet playing of Richard Mühlfeld, whom Brahms heard play Weber and Mozart in Meiningen. A number of Brahms' earlier works—the serenades and the symphonies—show a fondness for the clarinet, though Brahms had remarked, in a letter to Clara Schumann, that he felt the general level of playing had deteriorated. Upon hearing Mühlfeld, Brahms called him “the greatest wind player I know,” and his autumnal love affair with Mühlfeld's clarinet playing produced several works—the Trio in a minor, the Clarinet Quintet, and two sonatas for clarinet and piano—all of which have become central to the clarinet repertoire and provide an important counterbalance in Brahms' late instrumental music to the personal intimacy of the solo keyboard works.

In his essay on late style in Beethoven, Adorno posits that late works of art show “more traces of history than of growth.” The trio's first movement, marked *Allegro*, shows immediately the sense of distillation and streamlining of earlier formal conventions that one finds in Beethoven's later music. The movement begins, as does Beethoven's op. 135, with an ending—a phrase, from a slow movement, winding down to a ceremonious cadence. This introduction competes with faster material in search of the movement's tone of voice, and the structural polarity of key and theme that make up typical sonata forms is now tilted toward a contest between tempo and

affect. The second theme, for example, is startling in its easy and rustic beginning. Throughout, unity is created in this compact movement by a reworking of clear motivic strands; the tautness of the melodic material is matched by a masterful handling of the instruments, which seem to switch their mood and motion via the tiniest changes in register and gesture.

The second, slow movement *Adagio* is likewise focused and concentrated in a way belied by the expansive nature of the thematic materials. Like many of Brahms' slow movements, the music is characterized by lyrical mobility and driven by a developmental intention, the clarinet and cello alternating phrases in respective duets with the piano, which culminate in trio moments, the cello ascending into its upper registers to join with the clarinet in unison. The *Andante grazioso* replaces the typical scherzo with a seeming continuation of textures and ideas from the second movement. Brahms returns here to the inner movement dance agendas of early Classical divertimenti, with patterned passagework and a vaguely insistent waltz tempo—a true *Intermezzo* digression.

Brahms' chamber music often thwarts the expectation of a grand summation in a final movement. The *Allegro* begins at a quick tempo, though activity repeatedly slows in a way that makes clear that motion here is shaped largely by the sonorities of clarinet and cello. One hears Brahms' regard for Mühlfeld's clarinet in the organization of the music, as ideas are designed that provide textural openings for the sound that so captivated Brahms to shine through.

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#### about the performers

**Anthony Burr** is an Associate Professor of Music at the University of California, San Diego. As a clarinetist, composer and producer, he has worked across a broad spectrum of the contemporary musical landscape with groups and artists including: Alvin Lucier, Jim O'Rourke, John Zorn, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Laurie Anderson and many others. Ongoing projects include a duo with Icelandic bassist/composer Skúli Sverrisson, The Clarinets (a trio with Chris Speed and Oscar Noriega), a series of recordings with cellist Charles Curtis and a series of live film/music performances with experimental filmmaker Jennifer Reeves. He has produced and/or engineered records for La Monte Young, Charles Curtis, Skúli Sverrisson, Ted Reichman and many others. Upcoming releases include a new Anthony Burr/Skúli Sverrisson double CD with guest vocalists Yungchen Lamo and Arto Lindsay and a recording of Morton Feldman's Clarinet and String Quartet. His primary clarinet teachers were Chicago Symphony principal Larry Combs and David Shifrin.

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 Primrose Competition and the “President Prize” in the Tertis 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.” Having served as principal violist of the San Diego Symphony for eight seasons, he is 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 a member of Camera Lucida, Concertante Chamber Players and The Myriad Trio. Chen is currently on faculty at USC Thornton School of Music and California State University, Fullerton and has given master-classes in major conservatories and universities across North America and Asia. In August 2013, the Formosa Quartet inaugurated the annual Formosa Chamber Music Festival in Hualien, Taiwan. Modeled after American summer festivals such as Marlboro, Ravinia, the Taos School of Music, and Kneisel Hall, FCMF is the product of long-held aspirations and years of planning, and represents one of the quartet’s more important missions: to bring high-level chamber music training to talented young musicians in Taiwan and first-rate music to Taiwanese audiences.

Cellist **Charles Curtis** has been Professor of 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. 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 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 and Marian Zazeela, Éliane Radigue, Alvin Lucier, Christian Wolff, Alison Knowles and Mieko Shiomi. Of a recent New York recital the New York Times noted that Curtis’ “playing unflinchingly combined lucidity and poise... lyricism and intensity.” The current season includes solo concerts at New York’s Issue Project Room, the Auditorium du Louvre in Paris, the Rothko Chapel in Houston and the Kampnagelfabrik in Hamburg. Curtis is artistic director of Camera Lucida.

**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 Meglioranza, 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.



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**upcoming concerts**

**Monday, March 17**

Kodaly - Serenade for two violins and viola  
Beethoven - Cello Sonata in D Op. 102 No. 2  
Fauré - G minor Piano Quartet

**Monday, April 14**

Beethoven - Grosse Fuge  
Haydn - String Quartet Op. 20 No. 2  
Beethoven - String Quartet Op. 130

**Monday, June 2**

Mendelssohn - Piano Quartet in b minor, Op. 3  
Dvorak - F-minor Piano Trio, Opus 65  
Sibelius - String Quartet "Voces intimae"

**Monday, June 10**

Myriad Trio and Camera Lucida

Subscriptions (at a considerable savings from the already-reasonable single-concert price) are a wonderful way to take advantage of the best discounts and seating.

For more information, contact the San Diego Symphony ticket office at 619.235.0804 or via the web at: <http://www.sandiegosymphony.org/concertcalendar/cameralucida.aspx>

Tonight's concert will be broadcast Saturday, February 15th at 9 pm on kpbs-fm 89.5 or streaming at [kpbs.org](http://kpbs.org)

Artistic Director - Charles Curtis  
Executive Coordinator - Colin McAllister  
Program notes - Lukas Schulze  
Recording engineer - Tom Erbe  
Production manager - Jessica Flores

For more information:  
<http://www.cameralucidachambermusic.org>

We now have an official camera lucida kpbs email address for listener questions or comments!  
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