



Mahler Chamber Orchestra Mitsuko Uchida, *piano and director* Mark Steinberg, *concertmaster and leader* 



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Jeremy Geffen

ne of the many impressive traits of Mitsuko Uchida is that her sonar is always on. Her awareness of the musical decisions made by those around her is at once instinctive and informed, and seems to feed into the larger portrait of the artistic sensibilities of those with whom she collaborates. To watch Mitsuko at the Marlboro Music Festival, of which she is co-artistic director and at which she works with countless young artists at the most formative stages of their careers, is to see someone completely engaged with those around her. There, she will read chamber music with every participant, in a search to understand what truly motivates each musician. In the process she gently shapes the development of so many, though she insists that she does not—and will not—teach individuals.

The membership of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra includes many instrumentalists who have felt her musical influence, which is perhaps one of the reasons the partnership they share is so extraordinary. Though all are aware that they are on stage and are keenly attuned to giving "a performance," none seek to promote themselves over the music itself. I believe that this interest is pure, and that it gives them—and especially her—the energy needed for their astounding performances. We're fortunate, indeed, to welcome these extraordinary artists to Zellerbach Hall on Sunday afternoon.

And I mustn't forget to mention Saturday's Zellerbach Playhouse concert with the singular Matthew Whitaker (like Mitsuko, a hit last year on *Cal Performances at Home*), a true jazz prodigy still in the early years of what promises to be a legendary career. Whitaker arrives in Berkeley for his Cal Performances live-concert debut, hot on the heals of the recent release of his third album, the brilliant *Connections* (Resilience Music Alliance). I can't wait to hear him again!

March and April finds Cal Performances operating at full speed as we approach the April 20 announcement date for our brilliant 2022–23 season. (We just released our beautiful new 42-page season brochure to the printer; I can't wait to share it with you!) From now through the beginning of May, the remainder of our current season is filled with adventurous programming. You won't want to miss...

- the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (Mar 29 Apr 3), returning to Zellerbach Hall for the first time since the initial pandemic shutdown in 2020; this year's Ailey programs feature more than a dozen works from the company's legendary repertory
- the renowned English Baroque Soloists with conductor Sir John Eliot Gardiner in a transfixing program of works by Mozart and Haydn (Apr 10)
- Angélique Kidjo, our 2021–22 artist-in-residence, in her new music-theater piece *Yemandja* (a much-anticipated Cal Performances co-commission and *Illuminations* event, Apr 23).
- highly anticipated concerts with superb classical artists including Germany's Tetzlaff
   Quartet (Apr 23), another favorite from last season's *Cal Performances at Home*; pianist
   Daniil Trifonov (Apr 28), making his Cal Performances solo debut; and the Danish String
   Quartet (Apr 29)—a particular favorite of our chamber music audience—delivering the next
   installment in its ongoing Doppelgänger Project, a series of concerts that pairs late Schubert
   string quartets with newly commissioned works (on this occasion, a new quartet by the fascinating Finnish composer Lotta Wennäkoski).

Fasten your seatbelts; we have all of this—and more—in store before the season ends!

I know you join us in looking forward to what lies ahead, and to coming together—as we do today and have done so often in the past—to encounter the life-changing experiences that only the live performing arts deliver. We can't wait to share it all with you!

Jeremy Geffen Executive and Artistic Director, Cal Performances



21/22 SEASON

## **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**

Robert Battle, artistic director

Matthew Rushing, associate artistic director

PROGRAM A Tues, Mar 29, 7:30pm & Fri, Apr 1, 8pm Robert Battle Tenth Anniversary

ROBERT BATTLE Mass (2004; music: John Mackey)

In/Side (2008; music: "Wild is the Wind," recorded by Nina Simone) Ella (2008; music: Ella Fitzgerald) For Four (2021; Bay Area Premiere

music: Wynton Marsalis)

Unfold (2007; music: Gustave Charpentier,

recorded by Leontyne Price)

Takademe (1999; music: "Speaking in Tongues II,"

performed by Sheila Chandra

Love Stories finale (2004; music: Stevie Wonder)

Revelations (1960; music: traditional spirituals)

MB Wed, Mar 30, 7:30pm & Sat, Apr 2, 8pm

RENNIE HARRIS Lazarus (2018: music: Darrin Ross)

AILEY Revelations (1960; music: traditional spirituals)

PROGRAM C Thu, Mar 31, 7:30pm

JAMAR ROBERTS Holding Space (2021; West Coast Premiere,

staged version; Cal Performances Co-Comm

music: Tim Hecker)

ROBERT BATTLE For Four (2021; Bay Area Premiere;

music: Wynton Marsalis)

AILEY Reflections in D (1963; music: Duke Elling

ASZURE BARTON BUSK (2009; music: various artists)

PROGRAM D Sat, Apr 2, 2pm All-Alvin Ailey

AILEY

Blues Suite (1958; music: traditional; performed by Brother John Sellers)

Pas de Duke (1976; music: Duke Ellington)

Cry (1971; music: Alice Coltrane, Laura Nyro,

and The Voices of East Harlem)

Revelations (1960; music: traditional spirituals)

PROGRAM E Sun, Apr 3, 3pm

ASZURE BARTON BUSK (2009; music: various artists)

JAMAR ROBERTS Holding Space (2021; West Coast Premiere,

staged version; Cal Performances Co-Commission;

music: Tim Hecker)

Revelations (1960; music: traditional spirituals)

March 29-April 3

**ZELLERBACH HALL** 

#### Sunday, March 27, 2022, 3pm Zellerbach Hall

## Mahler Chamber Orchestra Mitsuko Uchida, *piano and director* Mark Steinberg, *concertmaster and leader*

#### **PROGRAM**

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791) Piano Concerto No. 23 in A major, K. 488

Allegro Adagio Allegro Assai

Henry PURCELL (1659–1695) Selected Fantasias

Fantasia Z. 740 (No. 11), a4, in A minor Fantasia Z. 736 (No. 9), a4, in B-flat major Fantasia Z. 738 (No. 10), a4, in C minor Fantasia Z. 745 (No. 13), a5, in F major, Fantasia upon one Note

#### INTERMISSION

MOZART Piano Concerto No. 24 in C minor, K. 491
Allegro
Larghetto
Allegretto

Mitsuko Uchida is managed by Kathryn Enticott at Enticott Music Management in partnership with Alexander Monsey at IMG Artists.

This performance is made possible, in part, by Patron Sponsor Nadine Tang.



#### Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Piano Concerto No. 23 in A major, K. 488

"Mozart essentially invented the classical piano concerto and then elaborated the concerto's potentialities of form and expression in a series of highly individual masterpieces. He unveiled a universe and then devoted himself to populating it with the most diverse creations."

-Maynard Solomon in Mozart: A Life

Maynard Solomon here eloquently sums up Mozart's extraordinary contribution to the development of the piano concerto, epitomized by the 12 keyboard masterpieces he wrote between 1784 and 1786. Each is a world unto itself, and one of the loveliest and most refined of these worlds is that of Piano Concerto No. 23, completed on March 2, 1786.

Sounding like an intimate conversation between close friends, the A-major is also one of the most vocal of the concertos. This is not surprising, for simultaneously Mozart was completing his vivacious comic opera, *Le nozze di Figaro*. Busy creating arias and ensembles for a castle-full of characters, Mozart apparently had plenty of melodic ideas left over, for this concerto is propelled by its melodies, some high-spirited, some heart-wrenching. Here the soloist is asked not so much to display her digital dexterity as to play the great opera singer, especially in the sublime slow movement.

As in most of the late concertos, the pianist also must share the spotlight with the orchestra's woodwind section. Mozart became more and more intrigued with how woodwind colors could blend and contrast with the piano, and for this concerto he had a pair of his favorite wind instruments, the round-toned, fruity clarinets, to exploit.

Concerto No. 23 is also filled with an emotional quality very characteristic of Mozart: the mood of smiling through tears. This is heard best in the first movement, which sounds outwardly serene, but immediately disturbs that atmosphere at the second chord with its dissonant note troubling the A-major harmony. "The light of the movement is one of a March day—the month in which it was composed—

when a pale sun shines unconvincingly through fleeting showers," is how Mozart scholar Cuthbert Girdlestone poetically described it. The second theme, introduced by the violins, is rather melancholy and grows more so as a bassoon and flute join in. As the exposition section closes, listen for a quiet, chin-up closing theme in the strings; from it Mozart will build an expressive development section.

Smiles give way to tears for the slow movement, one of Mozart's greatest and his only one in the key of F-sharp minor. The soloist opens with a poignant melody featuring large intervals in the manner of a virtuosic 18th-century diva. The orchestra answers with a more anguished melody, with achingly beautiful dissonances created by its clashing contrapuntal lines. Flutes and clarinets try to brighten the mood in the middle section. But the tears persist as the opening music returns and is capped by a heartbreaking closing coda.

The brilliant rondo finale at last dries all tears. And finally the pianist can play the virtuoso as she leads off with the sparkling rondo theme. But this is just one of a quiver-full of melodies Mozart has ready, and he keeps on shooting fresh musical arrows at us in a movement of nonstop vivacity and invention.

—Ianet E. Bedell © 2022

#### Henry Purcell Selected Fantasias

Purcell's Fantasias serve as a great, final hurrah capping the fertile era of viol consort music. The ensemble had already fallen out of fashion at the time these works were penned, having ceded popularity to the instruments of the violin family and their greater carrying power. This represents a great loss in the history of musical performance, as the reedy, plaintive voice of the viols evinces poignant flexibility of nuance, the blend of consort instruments offering unparalleled, unctuous richness. Often the opening of the chest of viols was an invitation to an evening of music-making amongst friends, convivial and intimate. In spirit and perhaps in timbre the closest modern institution to the consort is the string quartet. A translation of these works into a version for the expanded string quartet of the





string orchestra seems apt, beautiful and potent, collaborating with the resonance of the concert hall without ceding the sense of close rapport. We aim to draw our audience into the parlor, to invite our listeners to consort with us.

Clearly the viol consort ignited the young Purcell's heart and imagination. These pieces are, as the title indicates, filled with fantasy, with mercurial shifts of mood. They both lament and frolic, wail and playfully scurry. They seem to explore the boundary between private and public music, now on this side, now on that, slipping from one to the other with guileless naturalness. At times the seamless blending of the parts into an iridescent tapestry offers luxurious comfort; at others, confrontations between parts provoke a visceral thrill. Particularly exciting are the wild dissonances that blossom in the texture, each with its own special frisson. There are moments when a pleading dissonance, poised to resolve, instead slips into one even more spicy and anguished. In the spirit of a great massage, these harmonies hurt in the most delicious way and give us a sense of the physicality of musical discourse. Imitations and reflections abound; the music delights in intimate intertwinings, a sense of sensuality cloaked in geometry. Conversation and collision, friendliness and frictions. The

world of the viol consort is replete with wit, melancholic sighs, dance and despair, and, above all, the pleasures of keeping company with kindred souls.

-Mark Steinberg

#### Mozart

#### Piano Concerto No. 24 in C minor, K. 491

Even in the midst of its glorious partners, Mozart's Piano Concerto in C minor reduces sober analysts to awe—and superlatives. Beethoven loved this concerto and took inspiration from it for his own Third Piano Concerto, also in C minor. At a performance of the work, he exclaimed to a colleague, "Oh, my friend, we shall never get any idea like this!" The British scholar Sir Donald Francis Tovey called this concerto "perhaps the most sublime of all Mozart's instrumental works."

Minor keys seemed to have held a powerful personal meaning for Mozart, and he used them to explore his inner demons: grief, anger, frustration, the specter of death. Yet despite its frequently disturbing tone, K. 491 was written at a time of great artistic and professional success. It was completed on March 24, 1786, just three weeks after the Mozart composed Concerto No. 23, and while he was finishing his ebullient operatic comedy *Le nozze di Figaro*.

Yet with Mozart's art there always seemed to be a delicate balancing act between laughter and tears, and after so much joyous music, perhaps he felt a need to explore life's darker side.

What could be more disturbing than the stark unison theme opening the first movement? In just 11 bars, Mozart traverses all 12 tones of the chromatic scale: an act of harmonic daring extraordinary indeed for 1786! Against the intensity of the orchestra's exposition, the piano enters with a gentler, more diatonic theme, though soon the soloist is caught up in the chromatic turbulence.

After the customary solo cadenza near the movement's end comes a haunting closing coda, in which, unusually, the pianist continues to play with the orchestra. The richness of the orchestral writing throughout marks this concerto's greatness in the Mozart pantheon.

The second movement, in E-flat major, provides an island of peace in this sea of turbulence. In a straightforward rondo form, it features a refrain theme of naive simplicity. Woodwinds dominate the two episodes between the returns of the refrain; blessed with a full wind complement of flute, and pairs of oboes, clarinets, bassoons, and horns, Mozart gives us his most colorful, intricate woodwind writing.

A lightweight rondo finale would not have served Mozart's big vision for this concerto; instead, he chose an imposing theme-and-variations form, with eight variations of superb inventiveness and contrast. The theme is oddly ambiguous; Cuthbert Girdlestone suggests it is both "a march and a hymn." Mozart used both aspects as inspiration. Variation 3 exploits the march in an assertively martial treatment worthy of Beethoven. Variation 4, on the other hand, suggests Bach in the soloist's elegant fourpart counterpoint. A marvelous dialogue of oboes, bassoons, and flute distinguishes Variation 5. After another solo cadenza, Mozart switches to a bouncing meter for his final variation, but refuses to give us the expected "happy ending" in C major. The tragic vision persists to the end, with stinging chromatic writing for the soloist and a heroic close that awards victory to C minor.

—Janet E. Bedell © 2022

Janet E. Bedell is a program annotator and feature writer who writes for Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Caramoor Festival of the Arts, and other musical organizations.

#### ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Mahler Chamber Orchestra (MCO) was founded in 1997 based on the vision of a free and international ensemble, dedicated to creating and sharing exceptional experiences in classical music. With its core 45 members from 20 different countries, MCO works as a nomadic collective of passionate musicians uniting for tours in Europe and across the world. The orchestra has, to date, performed in over 40 countries across five continents. It is governed collectively by its management team and orchestra board; decisions are made democratically with the participation of all musicians.

MCO's sound is characterized by the chamber music style of ensemble playing among its alert and distinct musical personalities. The orchestra received its most significant artistic impulses from its founding mentor, Claudio Abbado, and from Conductor Laureate Daniel Harding. As current Artistic Partners, pianists Mitsuko Uchida and Leif Ove Andsnes as well as violinist Pekka Kuusisto inspire and shape the orchestra in long-term collaborations. Concertmaster Matthew Truscott leads and directs the orchestra regularly in chamber orchestra repertoire, while MCO's longstanding collaboration with Artistic Advisor Daniele Gatti focuses on larger symphonic works.

The MCO musicians' engagement with their audiences include *Feel the Music*, which opens the world of music to deaf and hard-of-hearing children through workshops in schools and concert halls. Through the MCO Academy, the orchestra works with young musicians to pro-

vide a high quality orchestral experience and a unique platform for international exchange.

MCO commenced its 2021-22 global season with its annual residency at the Lucerne Festival, performing with Yuja Wang, followed by the world premiere of George Benjamin's Concerto for Orchestra at the BBC Proms. Immersing listeners in Mozart's two most creative years, Leif Ove Andsnes reunited with MCO after their acclaimed album Mozart Momentum 1785 (Sony Classical).

With Mitsuko Uchida MCO will tour across Europe and from one US coastline to the other. The season also finds Igor Levit, Alina Ibragimova, and Elim Chan making their debuts. MCO will present Les Adieux with Patricia Kopatchinskaja, showcasing a visceral concert staging, and unveil pioneering new technologies that transform listeners' encounters with recorded performances into even more intimate and inspiring experiences.

One of the most revered artists of our time, Mitsuko Uchida is known as a peerless interpreter of the works of Mozart, Schubert, Schumann, and Beethoven, as well for being a devotee of the piano music of Alban Berg, Arnold Schoenberg, Anton Webern, and György Kurtág.

She has enjoyed close relationships over many years with the world's most renowned orchestras, including the Berlin Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony, London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, and—in the US—the Chicago Symphony and the Cleveland Orchestra, with whom she recently celebrated her 100th performance at Severance Hall. Conductors with whom she has worked closely have included Bernard Haitink, Sir Simon Rattle, Riccardo Muti, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Vladimir Jurowski, Andris Nelsons, Gustavo Dudamel, and Mariss Jansons.

Since 2016, Uchida has been an Artistic Partner of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, with whom she is currently engaged on a multi-season touring project in Europe, Japan, and North America. She also appears regularly in recital in Vienna, Berlin, Paris, Amsterdam, London, New York, and Tokyo, and is a frequent guest at the Salzburg Mozartwoche and Salzburg Festival.

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\*\* Concertmaster

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Mitsuko Uchida records exclusively for Decca, and her multi-award-winning discography includes the complete Mozart and Schubert piano sonatas. She is the recipient of two Grammy Awards—for Mozart concertos with the Cleveland Orchestra, and for an album of lieder with Dorothea Röschmann—and her recording of the Schoenberg Piano Concerto with Pierre Boulez and the Cleveland Orchestra won the *Gramophone* Award for Best Concerto.

A founding member of the Borletti-Buitoni Trust and Director of Marlboro Music Festival, Uchida is a recipient of the Golden Mozart Medal from the Salzburg Mozarteum, and the Praemium Imperiale from the Japan Art Association. She has also been awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Philharmonic Society and the Wigmore Hall Medal, and holds honorary degrees from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. In 2009, she was made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

Mark Steinberg is first violinist and founding member of the Brentano Quartet, in existence since 1992. With the quartet he has performed extensively in North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, as well as in Japan, China, Korea, Israel, and Colombia. The quartet is in residence at Yale University, has recorded extensively, and has won many awards, including the Naumburg Chamber Music Award, the inaugural Cleveland Quartet award, and the Royal Philharmonic Society award for best debut in the UK. Steinberg has

appeared often in trio and duo concerts with pianist Mitsuko Uchida, with whom he presented the complete Mozart sonata cycle in London's Wigmore Hall in 2001, with additional recitals in other cities. With Uchida, he has also recorded a group of Mozart sonatas for Philips. Steinberg has been soloist with the London Philharmonia, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Kansas City Camerata, the Auckland Philharmonia, and the Philadelphia Concerto Soloists, with conductors such as Kurt Sanderling, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and Miguel Harth-Bedoya. He holds degrees from Indiana University and the Juilliard School and has studied with Louise Behrend, Josef Gingold, and Robert Mann. Steinberg is currently on the violin faculties of the Manhattan School of Music, and CUNY The Graduate Center, He has served on quartet competition juries at the Banff International Quartet Competition, the London Quartet Competition, and twice at the Mozart International Quartet Competition in Salzburg as well as the Naumburg Violin Competition. Steinberg has taught often at the Banff Centre for the Arts, the Aspen Festival, Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, and the Taos School of Music and has given master classes at the Eastman School of Music; the Cleveland Institute of Music: the Britten-Pears Institute in Aldeburgh, England; the Mozarteum in Salzburg; the Guildhall School; the Amsterdam Conservatory; Yellow Barn; and numerous other schools.

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Proof of vaccination status, including booster, is required for entrance and masking is mandatory throughout the event. COVID-19 information is updated as necessary; please see Cal Performances' website for the most up-to-date policies and information.

