Mitsuko Uchida AND MAHLER CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 7:30 PM
BEASLEY CURTIS AUDITORIUM, MEMORIAL HALL

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The William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust

CAMPUS PARTNER Carolina Asia Center

MAHLER CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Piano and Director Mitsuko Uchida
Concertmaster and Leader Matthew Truscott
Flute Chiara Tonelli (Italy)
Oboe Clement Noël (France), Julian Scott (Great Britain)
Bassoon Fredrik Ekdahl (Sweden), Chiara Santi (Italy)
Horn José Miguel Asensi Martí (Spain), Anais Romero Blanquez (Spain)
Trumpet Ingrid Eliassen (Norway), Florian Kirner (Germany)

Timpani Martin Piechotta (Germany)
Violin I Matthew Truscott** (Great Britain), Annette zu Castell (Germany), May Kunstovny (Austria), Anna Matz (Germany), Hildegard Niebuhr (Germany), Geoffroy Schied (France), Sonja Starke (Germany), Hayley Wolfe (USA)
Violin II Irina Simon-Renes* (Germany), Stephanie Baubin (Austria), Michiel Commandeur (Netherlands), Christian Heubes (Germany), Paulien Holthuis (Netherlands), Nanni Malm (Austria), Naomi Peters (Netherlands)
Viola Béatrice Muthelet* (France), Florent Brémond (France), Yannick Dondelinger (Great Britain), Julia Neher (Germany), Delphine Tissot (France)
Violoncello Frank-Michael Guthmann* (Germany), Stefan Faludi (Germany), Christophe Morin (France), Philipp von Steinaecker (Germany)
Double Bass Christine Felsch* (Germany), Jon Mikel Martínez Valgañón (Spain), Piotr Zimnik (Poland)

**Concertmaster *Principal
PROGRAM

MOZART Piano Concerto No. 19 in F Major, K.459 (1756-1791)
I. Allegro
II. Allegretto
III. Allegro assai

BERG Three Pieces from Lyric Suite (arranged for string orchestra) (1885-1935)
I. Andante amoroso
II. Allegro misterioso
III. Adagio appassionato

INTERMISSION

MOZART Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor, K.466 (1756-1791)
I. Allegro
II. Romance
III. Allegro assai

LEGENDARY PIANIST

Mitsuko Uchida brings a deep insight into the music she plays through her own quest for truth and beauty. Renowned for her interpretations of Mozart, Schubert, Schumann, and Beethoven, she has also illuminated the music of Berg, Schoenberg, Webern, and Boulez for a new generation of listeners. She regularly performs with the world’s most respected orchestras—including the Cleveland Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, Berlin Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw, Bayerischer Rundfunk, and London Symphony—and conductors Mariss Jansons, Riccardo Muti, Sir Simon Rattle, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Vladimir Jurowski, and Andris Nelsons.

Since 2016, Uchida has been an artistic partner of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, directing Mozart concerti from the keyboard in tours of major European and Japanese venues. With a strong commitment to chamber music, she collaborates closely with the world’s finest musicians. She recently partnered with Jörg Widmann for a series of concerts at the Wigmore Hall, Elbphilharmonie, and Carnegie Hall and has collaborated with Magdalena Kožená, Dorothea Röschmann, and the Ebène Quartet.

Uchida records exclusively for Decca, and her extensive discography includes the complete Mozart and Schubert piano sonatas. She received a Grammy in 2011 for her recording of Mozart concerti directing the Cleveland Orchestra and in 2017 for an album of Schumann and Berg lieder with Dorothea Röschmann. Her recording of the Schoenberg Piano Concerto with Pierre Boulez and the Cleveland Orchestra won four awards, including The Gramophone Award for Best Concerto.

This concert, her fourth appearance with Carolina Performing Arts and first with an orchestra, is one of only two stops in the United States of her 2019 tour with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, pairing two Mozart piano concertos with excerpts from Alban Berg’s Lyric Suite.

Matthew Truscott is a versatile violinist who shares his time between period instrument and ‘modern’ performance, appearing with some of the finest musicians in both fields. He is the concertmaster of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, and also one of the leaders of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. His past work includes projects with English National Opera, the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, Budapest Festival Orchestra, The English Concert, Le Concert d’Astrée, and others. He is also the leader of Classical Opera, St James’s Baroque, and the Magdalena Consort. Matthew also teaches baroque violin at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

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

The MCO’s sound is characterized by the chamber music style of ensemble
playing among its alert and independent musical personalities. The orchestra received its most significant artistic impulses from its founding mentor, Claudio Abbado, and from Conductor Laureate Daniel Harding. Pianist Mitsuko Uchida, violinist Pekka Kuusisto, and conductor Teodor Currentzis are current artistic partners who inspire and shape the orchestra. Concertmaster Matthew Truscott leads and directs the orchestra regularly in its performances of chamber orchestra repertoire.

The MCO’s Education & Outreach projects include Feel the Music, which opens the world of music to deaf and hard of hearing children through workshops in schools and concert halls, and the MCO Academy, through which the ensemble works with the next generation of musicians to provide a high quality orchestral experience and platform for international exchange.

The MCO’s major projects in recent years include the award-winning Beethoven Journey with pianist Leif Ove Andsnes, who led the complete Beethoven concerto cycle from the keyboard in international residences. In 2012, the ensemble premiered the opera Written on Skin at the Festival d’Aix-en-Provence under the baton of composer George Benjamin, with whom the orchestra shares a close musical friendship. The MCO’s current partnership with Mitsuko Uchida, centred on Mozart’s piano concertos, includes multi-year residences at Salzburg’s Mozartwoche, London’s Southbank Centre and New York’s Carnegie Hall.

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**PROGRAM NOTES**

**WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART**

**Piano Concerto No. 19 in F Major, K.459**

The year 1784 was a good one for the 28-year-old Mozart. He had moved to Vienna in 1781 and quickly discovered that the city, as he wrote to his father, was “certainly the land of the clavier.” The fortepianos he found there, with their lighter touch and more delicate articulation, were well-suited to his playing style. He started a regular series of subscription concerts throughout the city and, to sustain audience interest, wrote new keyboard music at a fevered pitch. Between 1782 and 1786, he churned out 15 of his 28 keyboard concertos.

Even within that prodigious period, 1784 was different, marking an apex of Mozart’s writing for keyboard. Most of his compositions that year featured piano, including a quintet for piano and winds, sonatas for violin and piano, and six full piano concertos. This concerto, his nineteenth, was the last of the year, completed in December and premiered in early 1785. It was one of two concertos Mozart would perform for the coronation of Leopold II in 1790. Strangely, Mozart noted in his catalog of works that the ensemble for this concerto included two trumpets and timpani (perhaps as part of the coronation?), but no score with those instruments has ever been found.

The piece sees Mozart in a cheerful mood. It positively bursts with material: the opening movement contains no fewer than six distinct themes, and the other two movements present a similar proliferation, all of which Mozart manipulates with his usual confidence.

**ALBAN BERG**

**Three Pieces from Lyric Suite (arranged for string orchestra)**

Upon its premiere at the Baden-Baden Festival in 1927, Alban Berg’s Lyric Suite for string quartet was an immediate hit. The audience loved it so much that they forced the Kolisch Quartet to perform it again, and composer Aaron Copland raved that it was “one of the best works written for string quartet in recent years.” The work’s six movements are a masterclass in the wide expressive capacity of Arnold Schoenberg’s twelve-tone technique (in which all twelve pitches in an octave are given equal weight harmonically and melodically). Equally emphasized are the expansive sonic possibilities of the string quartet—setting the stage for Béla Bartók’s equally explosive Third and Fourth Quartets, which he would write shortly after Berg’s work premiered.

Throughout the Suite, Berg juggles those twelve tones to create aching lines and impenetrable dissonances with equal ease. To this day, there is even some lively debate about whether the work is actually meant to recount the affair between Berg and his longtime mistress, Hanna Fuchs-Robettin, with different pitch combinations and numeric
groupings relating to episodes between them. Whether that theory is real or fictitious is up for discussion.

Shortly after the premiere, Berg was approached, either by members of the Kolisch Quartet or by his publisher, to arrange some of the Suite for string orchestra. For reasons that are mostly lost to time, he chose to arrange only the second, third, and fourth movements. These three movements represent the emotional core of the work. The second, Andante amoroso, sighs and heaves in a continuous outpouring of expression, its sumptuous lines as saturated as a Matisse painting. The third movement, Allegro misterioso, turns the standard scherzo-and-trio form into a palindrome where the music from the beginning runs in reverse at the end. Each section feels full of flickering lights and fleeting fragments of color that vanish just as they come into focus. And the fourth movement, Adagio appassionato, may or may not be one long love scene, whose intensity continually builds like a scene out of a Wagner opera. Taking it almost to the point of breaking, the unstable six-note chord on which the movement ends provides neither a sense of arrival nor release. In its original context, there were two more movements for resolution; here, it just dissolves.

In transcribing the work for string orchestra, Berg sacrifices the transparency and agility of four single players for the depths and weight of a string section. He largely leaves the quartet parts intact, occasionally adding extra doublings, and also occasionally pulls back to a quartet of soloists, gesturing towards the clarity of the original. In the outer movements, all that extra heft gives the music a longing, ecstatic quality, whereas the Allegro misterioso swirls and churns even more indeterminately.

As the theorist Theodor Adorno wrote, “If the lyrical nature of the Suite is best fostered in the quartet, its dramatic nature is best fostered in the string tutti; only here are its contours dissolved as completely and enigmatically as the accompanimental concept of the sound demands; and only here does the paroxysm attain its full catastrophic force.”

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor, K.466
It’s strangely satisfying to hear that even the great composers sometimes struggled to meet their deadlines. For his first subscription concert of the year on February 11, 1785, at Vienna’s Mehlgrube Casino, Mozart wanted to unveil his latest piano concerto in D minor, his first in a minor key. The problem was that the composer cut things a hair too close, only managing to finish the score the night before, so he spent much of the day of the performance working with his copyist to make sure the orchestra had parts. And then there was the matter of rehearsing. Not to mention, Mozart’s father Leopold arrived that same day for a ten-week visit. Somehow, everything came together for the performance, as Leopold recounted in a letter to his daughter, Nannerl, a few days later: “Then came a new, superb piano concerto by Wolfgang, which the copyist was still writing out when we arrived, and your brother had not even found time to play through the Rondeau because he had to supervise the copying.”

Of Mozart’s 28 piano concertos, this one had the most immediate and lasting musical impact. It is the only one of Mozart’s concertos a young Beethoven ever performed in public (at a memorial concert to Mozart in 1795), and he would go on to compose cadenzas for it in 1809. It was also the sole Mozart concerto to be regularly performed throughout the nineteenth century.

Even the most cursory listen quickly explains why. As is often the case when Mozart wrote in minor keys, the piece is as dark and foreboding as they come, full of wrenching outbursts and moments of the deep angst more often associated with music from a generation or two later. The first movement opens with unsettled, syncopated chords (which commentators never forget to compare to his opera Don Giovanni) and rumbling figures in the cellos, with carefully placed lines in the winds only serving to further ratchet up the tension, which continues on through the rest of the movement. That mood persists through even the sunniest moments of the second movement, whose serene, regal main theme is interrupted by a lengthy cloudburst of darkness. The feeling is so pervasive that when the main theme of the closing rondeau transposes to major, the effect is almost comic. Given the complexity and subtlety on display, you would never know that Mozart had scrambled to get it done in time.

Dan Ruccia is a Durham-based composer, writer, and graphic designer.