

**MARCH 24**

7:30 PM TUESDAY

MEMORIAL HALL  
BEASLEY-CURTIS AUDITORIUM

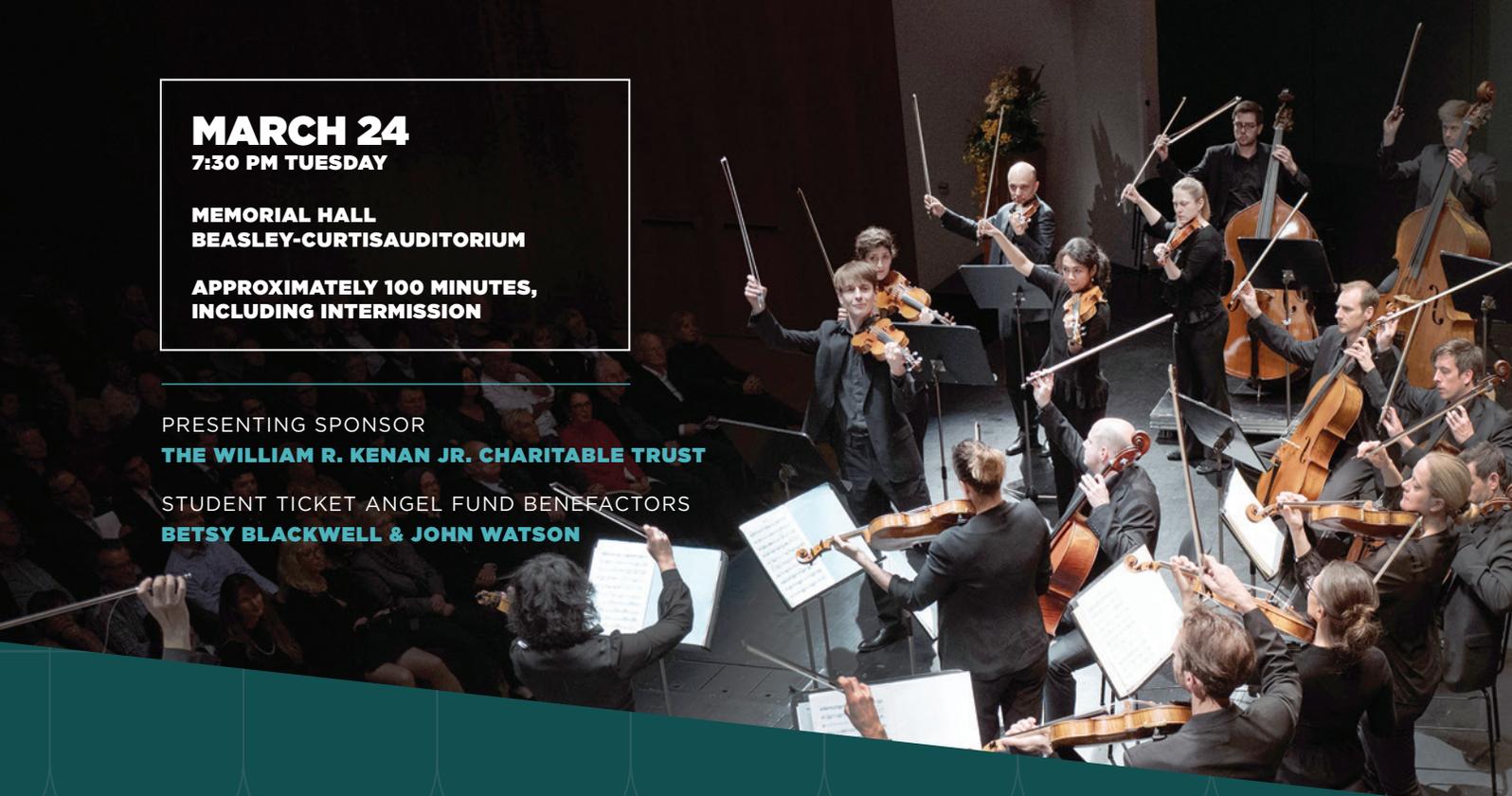
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# MITSUKO UCHIDA AND MAHLER CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

**MITSUKO UCHIDA,**

PIANO AND DIRECTOR

**MEESUN HONG COLEMAN,**

CONCERTMASTER AND LEADER



## PROGRAM

**MOZART** (1756–1791) Piano Concerto  
No. 17 in G Major, K. 453  
Allegro  
Andante  
Allegretto

**JÖRG WIDMANN** (b.1973) String Quartet No. 2  
"Choralquartett"  
Sehr langsam, tastend suchend  
(arr. Jörg Widmann for  
Chamber Orchestra)

## INTERMISSION

**MOZART** Piano Concerto No. 22  
in E-flat Major, K. 482  
Allegro  
Andante  
Allegro

**MITSUKO UCHIDA** has built up a reputation as a superlative performer of the works of Mozart, Schubert, Schumann, and Beethoven. Her devotion to Alban Berg and Arnold Schoenberg has illuminated the piano music of these two composers and their place within the central repertoire.

Uchida has a long history of performing with the world's most respected orchestras—Chicago Symphony, Berlin Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw, Bayerischer Rundfunk, London Symphony, and London Philharmonic, and recently celebrated her 100th concert with the Cleveland Orchestra. Since 2016, Uchida has been an *Artistic Partner* of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, with whom she has embarked on a five-year touring project taking in venues across Europe and North America.

Uchida, a multiple Grammy award-winner, was also awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Philharmonic Society in 2012 and received an Honorary Degree from the University of Cambridge in 2014. She was made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2009.

**MEESUN HONG COLEMAN'S** life and education started in Spartanburg, South Carolina. One of three daughters of Korean immigrants, she studied at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music Pre-college program before completing her Bachelor's in Music Composition at Princeton University, followed by a Masters from the Juilliard School.

In 2001, she went to Berlin as a Fulbright scholar to study with Thomas Brandis where she planned to stay for one year. Almost two decades later, she is still in Europe. Today, she is a professor of violin and chamber music at the Bruckner Universität Linz, concertmaster of the Kammerakademie Potsdam and the Haydn Philharmonie, and member of the Camerata Bern, where she regularly guest directs and solos.

#### **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, the MCO is known for their incomparable chamber music style of ensemble playing. The MCO works closely with a network of *Artistic Partners* who inspire and shape the orchestra in long-term collaborations. With pianist Leif Ove Andses, the orchestra is exploring two remarkable years in Mozart's life through *Mozart Momentum 1785/1786*, a four-year performing and recording project. With Pekka Kuusisto, the MCO is developing new concert formats involving multiple musical styles. The MCO's current partnership with Mitsuko Uchida, centered on Mozart's piano concertos, includes multi-year residences at Salzburg's Mozartwoche, London's Southbank Centre, and New York's Carnegie Hall.

## **PROGRAM NOTES**

### **MOZART**

PIANO CONCERTO NO. 17  
IN G MAJOR, K.453

Practically every discussion of Mozart's seventeenth piano concerto begins with his purchase of a European starling on May 27, 1784. The bird would become a beloved pet of the composer, in part because it could sing the opening five measures of the finale from this piano concerto. Nobody knows for sure when or how the bird learned to sing the tune (though it was probably trained by Mozart himself), but its rendition was nearly perfect, save for its tendency to hold onto one note for too long and sing another a bit sharp. Mozart wrote of its rendition, "Das war schön!" ("This was lovely!") When the bird died in 1787, Mozart gave it an elaborate funeral in his garden and wrote a poem to commemorate the occasion.

The concerto itself was written at the peak of Mozart's fame. That year, the twenty-eight-year-old composer wrote six piano concerti and performed in dozens of concerts around Vienna, often featuring new works. Unlike most of his keyboard output, though, Mozart did not write this piece to perform himself. Instead, it was commissioned by his student Barbara Ployel, who gave the premiere on June 13, 1784, with an orchestra hired by her father. Mozart would play other pieces

on that concert, including a double sonata with Ployel.

This G-major concerto is one of his most sophisticated. On the surface, it has all the typical Mozartian hallmarks: billowing melodies, an overabundance of themes, a seemingly endless forward drive, and dramatic flair to spare. But a deeper look reveals a work constantly pulling itself apart harmonically: Mozart glides through vaguely related key areas seemingly at will, using the resultant chromatic tension to power the work. In the first movement, Mozart moves decisively to both E-flat and B-flat at crucial moments, and the development section brims with high-wire modulations. Then, in the second movement, it sometimes feels like he is showing off: he constantly introduces strange dissonances and cross-relations as a way of moving further and further afield of the movement's C-major starting point, allowing him to shift abruptly between contrasting moods.

At one point, we find ourselves in the utterly preposterous key of G-sharp major, which contains eight sharps (noteworthy, considering that a major scale only has seven pitches). In a burst of pure, brazen audacity, Mozart somehow manages to modulate back to C major in four measures of largely unperturbed harmonic motion. After all the drama of the first two movements, the finale's cheerful theme and variations sounds, appropriately enough, like a songbird aflutter.

## JÖRG WIDMANN

STRING QUARTET NO. 2  
"CHORALQUARTETT" (ARRANGED  
FOR CHAMBER ORCHESTRA)

It has been said that the five string quartets by German composer, conductor, and clarinetist Jörg Widmann combine to form one giant meta-quartet. If that's the case, then this (the second) is his abstracted gloss on the concept of a slow movement. However, instead of treating the concept of slowness as a tempo marking, a space for majestically unspooling melodies, or an excuse to ruminate of some finer aspect of the human condition, Widmann uses slowness to explore the materiality of space and time and the ways in which sounds exist (or not) within them. In its original string quartet form, the piece uses an encyclopedia of extended techniques—scratches, grinds, gleaming glass, hushed brushing, notes that contort unexpectedly or dissolve into a shadowy gleam of color without hue, and on and on. These are intertwined with bursts of pseudo-Baroque harmony, creating drama on the edge of silence. But over the course of the work, the valence of these sounds change, with the tonal becoming disquieting and the dissonant almost peaceful.

Part of that drama comes from the piece's (unspoken) source material, Haydn's magnificent *The Seven Last Words of Christ*. Even though he never directly quotes Haydn, Widmann writes that his piece "would be inconceivable without prior knowledge of this composition." In particular,

Widmann is obsessed with the way Haydn illustrates the march toward, and acceptance of, death. "My work begins at the end of the path," Widmann writes. "These are all final tones, phrases from the past which originate from nowhere and do not lead anywhere. The horrifying friction and abrasion of skin on wood forms a central theme and is associated through silence with tonal choral elements."

At the same time, Widmann's chamber orchestra arrangement of the work pushes against that abrasive slowness. "Even more extreme than the arrangement of my fifth string quartet," he writes, "the orchestral version of the Choralquartett adds completely new voices to the previous structure. The double basses have an autonomous function, and the three added wind instruments (flute, oboe, bassoon) create new sound mixtures and perspectives through their figurations and counterpoint to the original material. Again and again, the brass acts against the strings, energetically pushing them towards a faster, more fluid tempo." Even amid all this new turmoil, Widmann's vision of the metaphysical slowness at the edge of the void still prevails.

## MOZART

PIANO CONCERTO NO. 22  
IN E-FLAT MAJOR K.482

Mozart was hard at work on *The Marriage of Figaro* in the winter of 1785 when he wrote his third piano concerto of the year. It had been a good year for the composer—he

played at least twenty concerts as a soloist and had a short slate of performances lined up for the following spring—but leaner times were approaching. That November, he sent a letter to Franz Anton Hoffmeister begging for a little extra money to get him through. This would become an increasingly frequent occurrence.

Few of those brewing troubles found their way into the glowing music he wrote in this concerto. Completed on December 16, it is one of his most richly scored works in the genre. It is the first to feature clarinets instead of the more traditional oboe; Mozart is said to have been so pleased with the results that he rescored his next concerto to include them. His use of

trumpet here is also notable. E-flat was about the most extreme key in which the instrument could be played at the time, though the sound it made in that key was particularly warm. Perhaps inspired by this, Mozart made lavish use of the winds throughout this piece, including many delightful stretches where the melody lingers among the flutes, clarinets, and bassoons.

That warmth extends to just about every aspect of the music. The first movement's thematic material is stately yet reserved, replete with ornate gestures and filigrees and exquisitely placed dramatic turns. The soloist flies around the keyboard, but in a way that never seems overly ostentatious. The finale has a similar mood,

built around a rollicking hunting theme that takes a few equally operatic turns. But it is the middle movement (one of the only ones he would write in a minor key) that truly stands out. Starting with the strings' tragic, hushed melody at the beginning, through the soloist's equally foreboding first statement, and the wonderfully bright response from the winds, the movement pushes through a seemingly endless range of emotional registers and orchestral colors. At its second performance in early 1786, the audience cheered so much after this movement that they demanded that a surprised Mozart play it again. He happily obliged. •

*Notes for this evening's program were written by Dan Ruccia.*

## MAHLER CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

### FLUTE

Chiara Tonelli (Italy)

### OBOE

Mizuho Yoshii-Smith  
(Japan)

Julian Scott  
(Great Britain)

### CLARINET

Vicente Alberola (Spain)  
Mariafrancesca Latella  
(Italy)

### BASSOON

Higinio Arrue Fortea  
(Spain)  
Chiara Santi (Italy)

### HORN

José Miguel Asensi  
Martí (Spain)  
Javier Molina Parra  
(Spain)

### TRUMPET

Christopher Dicken  
(Great Britain)  
Andreas Weltzer (Germany)

### TIMPANI

Martin Piechotta (Germany)

### VIOLIN I

Meesun Hong Coleman  
(USA)\*\*  
Kirsty Hilton (Australia)  
May Kunstovny (Austria)  
Anna Matz (Germany)  
Hildegard Niebuhr  
(Germany)  
Fjodor Selzer (Germany)  
Timothy Summers (USA)  
Hayley Wolfe (USA)

### VIOLIN II

Irina Simon-Renes  
(Germany)\*  
Stephanie Baubin  
(Austria)  
Michiel Commandeur  
(Netherlands)  
Christian Heubes  
(Germany)  
Paulien Holthuis  
(Netherlands)  
Naomi Peters  
(Netherlands)  
Mette Tjaerby Korneliusen  
(Denmark)

### VIOLA

Béatrice Muthélet  
(France)\*  
Yannick Dondelinger  
(Great Britain)  
Tony Nys (Belgium)  
Anna Puig Torne (Spain)  
Delphine Tissot (France)

### CELLO

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