

## **A fast and furious start**

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By Angela M. Owen

**PALO ALTO** – The 11<sup>th</sup> season of the California Music Center Festival Concerts had a fast and furious start Thursday at the Cultural Center. The artist faculty members participating in the opening concert were Marc Gottlieb and Vasile Beluska, violin, James Carter, viola, and Stefan Reuss, cello, in the Haydn Quartet Op. 74 No. 3 “The Rider”, Onnie Taylor, soprano, and Terry Yee, piano, in songs by Barber and Brahms; and William Klingelhofer, horn, Machiko Kobialka, piano, and Gottlieb in the Horn Trio by Brahms.

The Brahms Trio had the most exciting performance of the evening. The players made it a passionate, very physical thing, throwing themselves into the execution of their parts with unusual vigor. The singing and expressive slow movement gave little respite from the storm created in the first movement or the fury of the Scherzo. The breakneck speed of the final Rondo literally pulled the audience to the edge of their seats in breathless hope that the players could maintain their excellent ensemble to the end.

The Haydn Quartet opened the concert on a cheerful note. This mature work has more body and soul than his earlier quartets which fall more into the “pleasantly entertaining” category. The performers explored its various harmonic and melodic avenues and imbued it with an ebullience which added a feeling of youthful vivacity.

Taylor’s performance of the Brahms songs was uneven, due partially to an overly forceful piano accompaniment and partially to a difficulty in focusing and placing the voice. She seemed ill at ease with “O Kuehler Wald” and “Serenade” though her interpretation was good in all her songs, especially when aided by expressive gestures. In Barber’s “Hermit Songs,” the balance between voice and piano was better though both Taylor and Yee eschewed a soft and gentle approach needed by some of the music.