

6 Resonance

1–4 Märchenbilder (*Fairy-Tale Pictures*), op. 113 (1851)

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–1856)

Nicht schnell	3:07
Lebhaft	3:57
Rasch	2:35
Langsam, mit melancholischem Ausdruck	5:05

RICHARD O'NEILL, *viola*; GILBERT KALISH, *piano*

5 Conte Fantastique

(*The Masque of the Red Death*) (1922–1923)

ANDRÉ CAPLET (1878–1925)

BRIDGET KIBBEY, *harp*; KRISTIN LEE, SEAN LEE, *violins*;

PAUL NEUBAUER, *viola*; DANE JOHANSEN, *cello*

6–9 Concerto in D Major for Violin, Piano, and String Quartet, op. 21 (1889–1891)

ERNEST CHAUSSON (1855–1899)

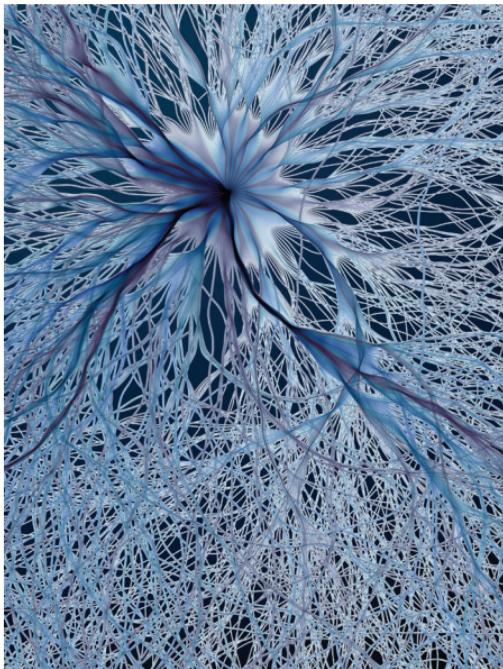
Decidé – Calme – Animé	14:07
Sicilienne	4:04
Grave	10:15
Très animé	10:54

ANI KAVAFIAN, *solo violin*; INON BARNATAN, *piano*; SEAN LEE, KRISTIN LEE, *violins*; ARNAUD SUSSMANN, *viola*; DMITRI ATAPINE, *cello*

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Music@Menlo *LIVE*

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SCHUMANN

Märchenbilder
(*Fairy-Tale Pictures*)

CAPLET

Conte Fantastique (*The
Masque of the Red Death*)

CHAUSSON

Concerto in D Major for
Violin, Piano, and
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6 Resonance

Music@Menlo's tenth-anniversary season, *Resonance*, explored the many ways in which music resonates within the listener. Music has an immense capacity to nurture the mind, transport listeners to new places, and, ultimately, delight the ears and stir the hearts of all people. Each disc of the 2012 edition of Music@Menlo *LIVE* captures the essence of *Resonance* and the festival's milestone season.

Disc VI explores the human imagination, beginning with Robert Schumann's *Märchenbilder*, an account of a child's fanciful daydreams. The contrasting *The Masque of the Red Death* follows; it is a chilling setting of Edgar Allan Poe's tale of a foolish prince who attempts to avoid the plague, represented as a dark character who follows him in the shadows. The disc concludes with Ernest Chausson's rousing, colorful, and evocative Concerto for Violin, Piano, and String Quartet.

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–1856)

Märchenbilder, op. 113 (1851)

In 1850, Robert Schumann accepted the position of Municipal Music Director in the city of Düsseldorf and was charged with directing the orchestra and chorus at the Allgemeiner Musikverein. By his second season, Schumann had become dismayed at the quality of the musicians in his charge and the irregular concert attendance of the city's population. Perhaps as an escape from his orchestral-centric directorial duties, in 1851, Schumann turned his attention to instrumental chamber music, composing



André Caplet's *Conte Fantastique*. L-R: Kristin Lee, Sean Lee, Bridget Kibbey, Dane Johansen, and Paul Neubauer.

his a minor Violin Sonata, the *Märchenbilder* for Viola and Piano, the g minor Piano Trio, and the d minor Violin Sonata in quick succession.

The *Märchenbilder*, or *Fairy-Tale Pictures*, in their child-like innocence and imagination hearken back to the style of Schumann's beloved *Carnaval*, composed several years earlier. Though there is no specific fairy tale associated with the *Märchenbilder*, the charming music evokes the spirit of a fantastical story. The somber *Nicht schnell* (Not fast) begins contemplatively in the key of d minor with a lyrical melody presented in the viola. Through various guises, the melody weaves its way through the viola and piano, highlighting the conversational quality of Schumann's music. The exuberant *Lebhaft* (Spirited) movement can be thought of as a march, with the viola taking on

a percussive quality from the opening bars. *Rasch*, a perpetual motion movement, begins with the piano and viola trading vigorous passages of running triplets. This energetic opening is contrasted with a dreamy and elusive second theme, before the opening character returns. The final and most substantial movement of the work, *Langsam, mit melancholischem Ausdruck* (Slowly, with melancholy expression), begins in the key of D major and is tinged with a bittersweet sadness throughout.

—Isaac Thompson

ANDRÉ CAPLET (1878–1925)

Conte Fantastique (The Masque of the Red Death) (1922–1923)

André Caplet was a French composer and conductor, known primarily for his opera and arrangements of works by Claude Debussy. Among his few compositions for instruments are chamber works for flute and piano and cello and piano, a score for military band, a concert work for cello and orchestra, two divertissements for harp, and the *Conte Fantastique* for harp and string quartet. In his *Conte Fantastique* (Fantastic Story), Caplet created a miniature tone poem based on Edgar Allan Poe's chilling tale *The Masque of the Red Death*, which tells of a prince who attempts to run from the plague, portrayed as a dark character hiding in his abbey.

—Richard Rodda

ERNEST CHAUSSON (1855–1899)

Concerto in D Major for Violin, Piano, and String Quartet, op. 21 (1889–1891)

The composer Ernest Chausson's early music is characteristically French in its delicacy and aesthetic refinement, though it is also highlighted by the bold chromaticism and instrumental colors of Richard Wagner. But in the late 1880s, Chausson's music grew bolder still, and the French sensibility of his earlier work gained in dramatic depth.

Though not a work intended for a dramatic setting, the Opus 21 Concerto for Violin, Piano, and String Quartet illustrates the dramatic character of Chausson's music during this time. It is also, in its design, a unique work: it is a hybrid between chamber music and a double concerto for violin and piano, with the string quartet serving as a kind of pseudo-orchestra but with each individual player as distinctly involved, as befits a chamber work.

The concerto begins with an emphatic three-note motif, introduced by the piano and then repeated with the viola and cello. The string quartet expands on this motif in hushed tones. After further build-up, the solo violin makes a dramatic entrance, spinning the exultant main theme from the three-note motif. The solo violin and cello issue a pleading melody, built on plaintive half steps, and the music gradually melts into the deeply felt second theme.

Building on the exposition's thematic material, Chausson crafts a development section of magnificent power. The three-note motif returns, but now tempered by a gentle response from the piano. Over a shimmering piano accompaniment, Chausson revisits the poignant second theme, slowed down to create a feeling of time suspended. At the movement's climactic point, the plaintive second theme cries out a final time, but the turbulence subsides and the movement ends on a note of serene repose.

The second movement is a *Sicilienne*, an instrumental form that dates back to the Baroque period, normally in a slow 6/8 or 12/8 tempo. Chausson and his contemporary Vincent d'Indy compared the wistfulness of this music to "the charming fanciful gardens of Gabriel Fauré."

The third movement begins with a humorless chromatic figure in the piano, over which appears a desolate theme, played in unison by the piano and violin. The entrance of the quartet heralds a new section. Rather than offering a contrast in mood, however, this passage only deepens the sense of anguish. The featherweight texture of a passage midway through the movement, built on hushed chords in the piano and whispered arpeggios in the strings, makes for a seeming moment of respite—but even this music turns out to be simply another perspective on the movement's essential de-



Ernest Chausson's Concerto in D Major for Violin, Piano, and String Quartet, op. 21. L-R: Ani Kavafian, Inon Barnatan, Sean Lee, Kristin Lee, Dmitri Atapine, and Arnaud Sussmann.

spair. The music arrives at a piano-and-violin duet of exquisite delicacy; the chromatic melody and syncopated rhythms sustain a feeling of unease. The desolate theme from the opening returns, but now in a state of great agitation, bringing the movement to an arresting climax.

The final movement answers the gravity of the slow movement with renewed vigor. Structurally, the finale combines elements of rondo form—in which a recurring theme alternates with contrasting episodes—and variations form, meaning that the recurrences of the theme are steadily transformed throughout the movement. Using this technique, Chausson takes the movement through a variety of expressive characters.

—Patrick Castillo



André Caplet's *Conte Fantastique*. Paul Neubauer and Kristin Lee.

About Music@Menlo

Music@Menlo is an internationally acclaimed three-week summer festival and institute that combines world-class chamber music performances, extensive audience engagement with artists, intensive training for preprofessional musicians, and efforts to enhance and broaden the chamber music community of the San Francisco Bay Area. An immersive and engaging experience centered around a distinctive array of programming, Music@Menlo enriches its core concert programs with numerous opportunities for in-depth learning to intensify audiences' enjoyment and understanding of the music and provide meaningful ways for aficionados and newcomers of all ages to explore classical chamber music.