

4 Resonance

1–4 Piano Trio in f minor, op. 65 (1883)

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)

Allegro ma non troppo 12:54

Allegro grazioso 6:19

Poco adagio 9:09

Finale: Allegro con brio 9:43

GILBERT KALISH, *piano*; ARNAUD SUSSMANN, *violin*;
DAVID FINCKEL, *cello*

5–8 Piano Quartet no. 2 in g minor, op. 45 (1885–1886)

GABRIEL FAURÉ (1845–1924)

Allegro molto moderato 10:26

Allegro molto 3:24

Adagio non troppo 9:21

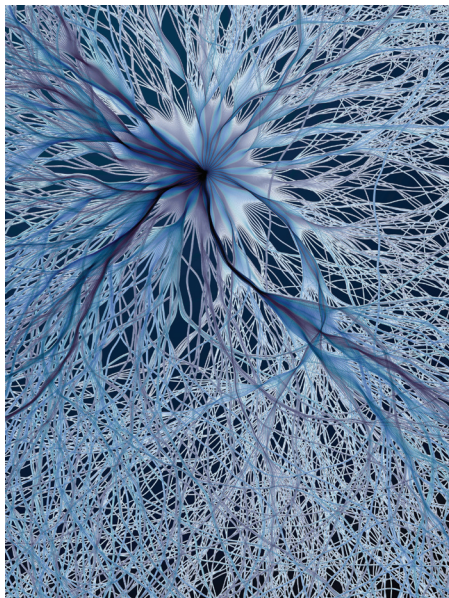
Finale: Allegro molto 8:59

WU HAN, *piano*; ARNAUD SUSSMANN, *violin*; RICHARD O'NEILL, *viola*;
DMITRI ATAPINE, *cello*

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Music@Menlo *LIVE*

4 Resonance



DVOŘÁK

Piano Trio in f minor

FAURÉ

Piano Quartet
no. 2 in g minor

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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 IV speaks to music's capacity to incite our most visceral emotions. Antonín Dvořák's Piano Trio in f minor and Gabriel Fauré's Piano Quartet in g minor both reflect the passion and grand-scale emotions of the height of the Romantic period. Each of these masterpieces is characteristic of the Romantic musical idiom.

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)

Piano Trio in f minor, op. 65 (1883)

The Piano Trio in f minor is the third of Dvořák's four existing trios; it was composed in 1883, when he was at a crossroads in his artistic career. Having built his reputation up to this point on the strength of the Czech accent of his music, he was now incorporating the language of his German Romantic contemporaries, favoring instead the darker *Sturm und Drang* style. Throughout its four movements, the f minor trio is relentlessly expressive and bespeaks a newfound artistic maturity in Dvořák's writing. Betraying perhaps an increased familiarity with Brahms's scores, the trio demonstrates remarkable assurance and control on Dvořák's part in the development and organization of his musical ideas.



Antonín Dvořák's Piano Trio in f minor, op. 65. L-R: Arnaud Sussmann, Gilbert Kalish, and David Finckel.

The *Allegro ma non troppo* begins with a dramatic introduction, begun in expectant octaves by the violin and cello and then joined by the piano; a crescendo from pianissimo to fortissimo ushers in the forceful first theme. The first theme group is a succession of one exceptional melody after another. Equally impressive is how seamlessly Dvořák brings the listener through such wide-ranging emotional terrain. The second theme group departs from the agita of the first, the cello introducing the lyrical and deeply felt melody.

The development section, in characteristically Romantic fashion, mines the expressive depth of the exposition's thematic material, beginning with the first theme, now set in the warm key of B major. But this quickly yields to further disquiet, with the music making a startling harmonic shift from B major to b-flat minor. At the end of the

development section, the cello puts together a long, eloquent melody, based on fragments of thematic material from the exposition but slowed down to half-tempo. The music arrives at the recapitulation forcefully and with gripping conviction.

The scherzo movement evokes Dvořák's Slavic roots, adopting the rhythmic gait of a polka. Wrapped in the garb of this Bohemian dance, however, is a vigorously Romantic statement. The trio section offsets the driving, forward motion of the dance with a dream-like idyll. This music's serenity is colored with a subtle melodic inflection: the half step between A-flat and B-double flat, which appears at the peak of the trio's opening violin line, gives the melody a Bohemian accent.

The slow third movement shows Dvořák at his most inspired. Above solemn chords in the piano, the cello offers a broad and touching theme, vocal and human in its expressive quality. And when the violin enters, the resulting duet could rank alongside the most affecting love duets of any Romantic opera. As a foil to the devastating emotional depth of this opening, Dvořák follows with another violin-and-cello dialog that couldn't be more simple: the child-like naïveté of this theme is disarming and exquisitely poignant.

Like the scherzo, the final movement begins with the élan of a lively folk dance; the cross-rhythms call to mind the *furiant*, a Czech dance form that Dvořák drew upon numerous times throughout his career. The folk flavor of the movement is reinforced by the second theme, a tranquil, waltz-like tune. The remainder of the movement is given over to working through both themes until, near the end of the finale, Dvořák shows a cunning sleight of hand: the restless energy of the finale culminates in a powerful reminiscence of the first theme of the first movement. This dissolves into a wistful moment of reflection, before the trio finally races to its blazing finish.

GABRIEL FAURÉ (1845–1924)

Piano Quartet no. 2 in g minor, op. 45 (1885–1886)

Gabriel Fauré's Second Piano Quartet represents a manifold enigma for chamber music audiences. In contrast with the composer's reputation as a miniaturist of characteristically French elegance, the quartet's rhetorical power places it toe to toe with the robust piano quartets of the German Romantics.

The Second Quartet moreover remains enigmatic for how little we know surrounding its creation. Fauré likely composed the work between 1885 and 1886 and played the piano part himself at its premiere on January 22, 1887, at a concert presented in Paris by the Société Nationale de Musique Française. The score bears a dedication to the German pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow. Otherwise, almost nothing is known of the quartet's circumstances.

The opening movement immediately commences with a turbulent piano accompaniment, with the violin, viola, and cello in unison to introduce the impassioned theme. The subsequent material derives from the physiognomy of this opening melody. A thoughtful utterance by the viola heralds a change in complexion; Fauré fashions a gentler and more tender music, which soon progresses to the ethereal high register of the violin. Following a tranquil recitative in the viola and cello, punctuated by quietly rolled chords in the piano, the violin further transfigures the theme, *pianissimo* and *dolcissimo*. The viola, assuming further significance in the movement's narrative structure, emerges from this transfiguration cryptically hemming and hawing; the movement passes into the development section, a harmonically rich mosaic of fragments of earlier material. The arrival at the recapitulation is forceful and abrupt.

The quartet's fiendish pianism continues in the scherzo. The left hand's frenetic eighth-note accompaniment, accentuated by forceful pizzicati, provides a propulsive backdrop for the mischievously syncopated melody in the right hand. The strings, in unison, introduce their own musical idea, painted in broad strokes and superimposing 3/4 time onto the established 6/8 meter. The piano comments with increasingly

chromatic iterations of its own melody. As the scherzo progresses, the music seems on the verge of eruption at any moment, but Fauré allows no such indulgence; instead, his sure-handed restraint only stokes further disquiet.

The piano introduction to the *Adagio* extends the scherzo's metric ambiguity, as Fauré divides the movement's 9/8 meter—a time signature typically treated as nine small beats grouped into three big beats (1-2-3, 2-2-3, 3-2-3)—into uneven groups of two (1-2, 2-2...). Fauré apparently designed this passage to evoke church bells that he heard as a child in the village of Cadirac. The viola again assumes a prominent role, answering the piano undulations with fitting simplicity. Fauré explicitly instructs the viola to play *piano, dolce, espressivo, senza rigor*. The dialog between these two musical ideas—or, perhaps, not a dialog but a poignant attachment of two estranged monologs—provides the blueprint for the rest of the movement. (Aaron Copland remarked that this slow movement's “beauty is truly classic if we define classicism as intensity on a background of calm.”)

The finale answers the *Adagio* with a return to the first movement's furious energy. Fauré even ups the fourth movement, marking it *Allegro molto*, but his economy and concision of thematic material hold the wagon firmly intact through the tempestuous journey. The movement never relents; indeed, Fauré saves the coup de grâce for the exuberantly triumphant coda.

—Patrick Castillo



Gabriel Fauré's Piano Quartet no. 2 in g minor, op. 45. L-R: Arnaud Sussmann, Richard O'Neill, Wu Han, and Dmitri Atapine.

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.