

ENCORE Chamber Music at Mixon Hall (July 16)

by Samantha Spaccasi



ENCORE Chamber Music’s “Sunday Unplugged” series presented a true “Transfigured Night” on July 16 at the Cleveland Institute of Music’s Mixon Hall. The magical evening was marked by exquisite performances from all musicians.

Violist Ettore Causa and pianist Hyun Soo Kim opened the program with

Schumann’s *Fantasiestücke*. If he were alive today, the composer would have appreciated the duo’s excellent interpretation. Kim and Causa showed great communication throughout — Causa brought the emotion and tenderness the piece requires, and Kim delineated every voice through his gentle and clear playing. The violist’s velvet tone and the pianist’s flowing, dreamy style were a perfect match, contributing to a colorful and playful performance.

This match continued for Fauré’s *Les Berceaux*. The short piece is characterized by a rocking, melancholy melody that Causa and Kim played with nuance. The pianist provided especially great phrasing.

Violinist Nancy Zhou joined Kim for Szymanowski’s *Mythes*. Kim played the trancelike melody with mystery, while Zhou, alternating fury and light, evoked a Siren’s song. The violinist’s mesmerizing playing was thrilling to hear, especially her emphasis of the work’s creepy, jarring elements. She nailed every mood change and technically demanding aspect of the work with ease. In the last movement, “Dryades et Pan,” she and Kim created an enchanting, macabre lullaby that transformed into a tornado of sound.

The highlight of the evening was naturally Schoenberg’s monumental *Verklärte Nacht*, complete with a reading in both in English and German of Richard Dehmel’s eponymous

poem that inspired the work. Causa and Zhou were joined by cellists Amit Even-Tov and Mindy Park, violist Dimitri Murrath, and violinist Jinjoo Cho.

The ensemble sounded looming and powerful, portraying the many emotions the daunting piece requires. Causa and Even-Tov created dark, somber moods, lending an appropriately funereal ambiance. Cho played the sweeping passages with intelligent phrasing that expressed the emotional core of the work. After the violists tossed off a slew of ferocious passages, they and the cellists launched into a moment of calm, creating a warm embrace only to break it with fervor moments later. Murrath produced a rich tone, and Zhou's dynamic playing revealed the anxious character of the work. Park's delicate yet mournful wails added drama to the performance. Indeed, these musicians encapsulated the meaning of Schoenberg's work, resulting in a transfigurative experience.

Published on ClevelandClassical.com July 18, 2017.

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