



Sunday, March 3, 2024, 3pm
Hertz Hall

Conrad Tao, *piano*

PROGRAM

Johannes BRAHMS (1833–1897) *Klavierstücke*, Op. 118 (1893)
I. Intermezzo

David FULMER (b. 1981) *I have loved a stream and a shadow*
(*With glitter of sun-rays, Nor with stars stretched, nor looking back from heaven*)
(2023)
I.

BRAHMS *Klavierstücke*, Op. 118 (1893)
II. Intermezzo
III. Ballade
IV. Intermezzo

Rebecca SAUNDERS (b. 1967) *Mirror, mirror on the wall* (1994)

BRAHMS *Klavierstücke*, Op. 118 (1893)
V. Romanze

INTERMISSION

Todd MOELLENBERG *Leg of Lamb* (after Bernadette Mayer) (2020)

FULMER *I have loved a stream and a shadow...* (2023)
II. —
III.

Maurice RAVEL (1875–1937) *Gaspard de la nuit* (1908)
Ondine
Le gibet
Scarbo

BRAHMS *Klavierstücke*, Op. 118 (1893)
VI. Intermezzo

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A NOTE FROM THE PERFORMER

In *Leg of Lamb*, composed for me in 2020, Todd Moellenberg gives a pianist pitches to play as they read a poem by Bernadette Mayer; rhythms are contingent on the pianist's speech, and thus change in every performance. Mayer's poem takes as its subject poetry itself: "A line break/Could reflect/The way the sun breaks/Through the clouds or breakfast."

What is the act of breaking a line? What might it imply? I like Mayer's poem because it makes me reflect on my own programming. My goal is to use juxtapositions traversing centuries in my programs to explore what might be shared DNA underneath wildly different aesthetics, and to hear familiar works in some new dimensions. I find the individual pieces and overall arrangement of Brahms' Op. 118 *Klavierstücke* already poetic as published; tonight, the extravagant gestures of David Fulmer's new work, *I have loved a stream and a shadow* (*With glitter of sun-rays, Nor with stars stretched, nor looking back from heaven*)—which takes as its title and subtitle lines from Ezra Pound's "Ortus" and "Canto III"—both interrupt and enliven the experience of hearing Brahms again. But Mayer's poem also pokes at us: "Starting over's our addiction, a dead/End and where does that leave us?" I've been constructing programs like this for about 10 years now, and sometimes I wonder if I am simply falling into a pattern. I want to lean into that ambivalence, explore it, feel it out.

Rebecca Saunder/*Mirror, mirror on the wall* also has a poetry about it. Its musical material asks us to hear between the sounds, listening not only to what is actively pushed out by the performer but the cloudier res-

onances that result from those actions. The familiar is reconfigured: at the center of the work is a "waltz" that appropriately centers around actions of the feet—pedal noise plays a starring role—but strips the form of its usual identifying surface features, reducing it to its meter, to the fundamental shape and feel of the dance. The piece's title evokes the fairy tale of Snow White; when playing it I find myself reflecting on beauty, truth, and the dangers of vanity. I believe in beauty; I pursue it above all else. A commitment to true beauty demands that I not cling anxiously to any single aesthetic surface; the paradox is that it also demands attention to the surface, attention to and love of sound.

The fantastical and poetic most vividly commingle in Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit*, which takes after prose poems from Aloysius Bertrand's heady, mysterious book of the same name. While Ravel's subtitle is "three poems for piano after Aloysius Bertrand," Bertrand's is "fantasies in the manner of Rembrandt and Callot." This is work with the fundamentals of art, and translation into different mediums, on its mind. Bertrand's collection also extensively explores Gothic themes: the titular Monsieur Gaspard de la nuit,

supposedly the true author of these poems, is also the Devil himself. Perhaps this is also a way of articulating ambivalence about the role of the artist, insisting that we consider the shadow as we revel in the sublime. And whether we are listening to the seductive coos of the ever-tragic and ever-dangerous Ondine, or observing a corpse hanging from the gallows at sunset, or hiding ourselves from the grotesque Scarbo's mischievous pirouettes, Ravel's music—colorful, exquisitely proportioned, capable of turning from gorgeous to terrifying in a single breath—is truly sublime.

—Conrad Tao

POETRY AND FANTASY, LINE BREAKS AND HALLUCINATIONS

by Thomas May

“I was thinking about fairy tales and poetry while putting this program together,” says Conrad Tao. “I especially wanted to hear Brahms’ Opus 118 *Klavierstücke*—with their expressive mystery and elegant balance—in this context.”

At first sight, Tao’s dual career brings to mind a *modus operandi* deeply rooted in the Western classical tradition. The lineage of virtuoso pianist-composers who moved seamlessly between identities includes the likes of Mozart, Busoni, and Rachmaninoff—all of whom similarly began as child prodigies. But as a 21st-century manifestation of the performer-composer, Tao has been charting unknown territory and reshaping the model of the virtuoso pianist.

A firm conviction of the “insistently *present* aspect of music-making,” as Tao puts it, guides his approach not only to performance but to programming as well. Rather than merely reshuffle selections from the standard repertoire and splice them with new pieces, his programs in themselves represent acts of composition.

The impetus for his latest recital program was a desire to spend time with Brahms’ solo piano music and, specifically, to play the Op. 118 *Klavierstücke* in public for the first time.

The opportunity to introduce new pieces by his colleagues David Fulmer and Todd Moellenberg in the context of the Brahms, Tao recalls, inspired him to consider inter-related themes of poetry, fantasy, and fairy-tale when he composed this program: that is, when he put it together, which is what the Latin root of to “com-*pose*” in fact means: to put objects together.

Tao’s field of associations additionally led him to think of the poetry of Rebecca Saunders’ music. “A continuum is drawn across these works,” he notes, “with the absence of phrasings” in Saunders’ *Mirror, mirror on the wall* and “the free, rapid gestures of David Fulmer’s *I have loved a stream and a shadow* serving as poles.” In the concluding work, Ravel’s *Gaspard de la nuit*, “the fantastical and poetic most vividly commingle.”

Johannes Brahms *Klavierstücke*, Op. 118

In his early solo works for the keyboard, Johannes Brahms tended toward monumental reworking of classical forms, whether in sonatas or variations. But after impressing such mentors as Robert and Clara Schumann and other figures, and despite “being admittedly more comfortable composing for the piano than for any other medium,” writes biographer Jan Swafford, “Brahms paradoxically gave up sonatas entirely ... and spent the heart of his career barely composing solo piano music at all.” When he returned to composing for solo piano in 1892, after a long hiatus, his focus was excessively on collections of poetically concise miniatures.

In 1892, the year before he turned 60, Brahms produced 20 small masterpieces that he published as Opus 116 through 119. Along with any hidden personal significance—possibly entailing “love songs to lost women in [the composer’s] life”—these late piano works, in Swafford’s assessment, represent “a summation of what Brahms had learned, almost scientific studies of compositional craft and of piano writing, disguised as pretty little salon pieces.”

Four of the six Op. 118 pieces, his second-to-last collection for solo piano (published in 1893), are called *intermezzos*; the third and fifth pieces are labeled *Ballade* and *Romanze*, respectively. Dedicated to Clara Schumann, they convey a multilayered sensibility of regret and reminiscence that marks their language as “late Brahms.” The collusion of

technical self-awareness—of how the language of music is made to communicate, including awareness of its limitations—with subtle poetry that evokes complex (even partially contradictory) emotional states lies at the heart of their “expressive mystery,” to borrow Tao’s apt phrase.

Aside from No. 1, each piece is cast in a simple ABA song form; in duration, they range from around two minutes (No. 1, Intermezzo in A minor) to between five and six minutes (No. 2, the Intermezzo in A major, and No. 6, the concluding Intermezzo in E-flat minor). The set opens eruptively and passionately, but the A minor Intermezzo unexpectedly reaches the major in its final gestures, suggesting a story that must be continued. In fact, Brahms calls four of the six pieces in Op. 118 *intermezzi*—a particularly ambiguous designation, since by definition, an intermezzo is an “entr’acte,” something implicitly intended to come between large, more “substantial” fare (above all, in the context of the theater), rather than to be considered the whole meal in itself.

David Fulmer

I have loved a stream and a shadow

Tao plays with this tension between a self-standing composition and one intended to link to something else with his programming concept, which interleaves the Brahms pieces with other compositions.

A New York-based composer, conductor, and violinist, Fulmer wrote his tripartite piece for Tao and has dedicated the score to him. The title and subtitle come from the poetry of Ezra Pound: the 1913 poem “Ortus” (which means “birth”) is the source of the line “I have loved a stream and a shadow,” while “with glitter of sun-rays/Nor with stars stretched, nor looking back from heaven...” comes from “Canto III,” which he published in 1917.

The Pound references are, however, not programmatic. They occurred to Fulmer only after he completed the composition. “I can never find a title until the double bar

is drawn,” he says. Rather, the connection is that Pound “creates a mood that is reflected in the dialect I use musically.” Fulmer compares his poetry to “lemonade made with 100% lemon juice, no sugar. It’s so concentrated.”

Each of the three movements of *I have loved a stream and a shadow* is “completely different temporally, spatially, and registrationally,” according to Fulmer, yet they are tied together “as an aggregate collection that articulates a single artistic concept.” The first movement begins with relentlessly rapid music that moves from the uppermost range of the keyboard to the other extreme. Fulmer dispenses with bar lines while at the same time writing intricately calculated rhythmic structures—an organization that “builds in a lot of freedom for Conrad within the fabric of the unfolding process” without leaving room for improvisation. He describes the movement as a whole as “gestural” and made of mercurial, fleeting shifts from bright to dark and brooding music.

Beginning with a cloudy atmosphere, as Fulmer puts it, the left and right hands intersect in the second movement, mimicking little bells in the high register and low drones in the bass that punctuate the piece throughout. The third movement, which features the greatest amount of surface variety in the work, “starts vibrantly, with the left and right hand in perfect coordination” and precedes with “a disintegration of rhythmic profile.”

Tao points to a “vivid sense of line” in Fulmer’s music; at times, its lines give the impression “that they can go on forever.” He compares this quality to his impression of Brahms as a notably “line-oriented” composer. “Whenever I play his music, I search for the continuous line. The beautiful thing about Brahms is that oftentimes that line is articulated as a totality. It cannot be expressed in just one voice but is better expressed as the space between voices. Brahms is all about counterpoint—especially the first and fourth pieces in Op. 118.”

Rebecca Saunders***Mirror, mirror on the wall***

The poetry and ambivalence implicit in Brahms/Op. 118 pieces thus prompted Tao to consider juxtaposing them with other kinds of poetry. The London-born, Berlin-based Rebecca Saunders, who in 2019 became the first female composer to win the prestigious Ernst von Siemens Music Prize, brings an intense curiosity to her exploration of the full timbral potential of an instrument and to the “sound surfaces” of her musical material. *Mirror, mirror on the wall*, an early work for solo piano from 1994, reflects what Saunders describes as her process, when she composes, of imagining that she holds “the sounds and noises in my hands, feeling their potential between my palms, weighing them. Skeletal textures and musical gestures develop out of this. Then, like pictures placed in a large white room, I set them in silence, next to, above, beneath and against each other.”

Todd Moellenberg***Leg of Lamb***

Todd Moellenberg’s work presents another strategy “to interrupt and enliven the experience of hearing Brahms again.” The Los Angeles-based Moellenberg is a pianist with a special interest in the avant-garde legacy and a conceptual artist who traverses several disciplines, drawing on poetry, video, and performance art. *Leg of Lamb*, which he wrote for Tao in 2020, developed from experimental work with speech rhythms and melody generation from language in which Moellenberg was engaged during the first lockdown. The process involves transcribing any musical pitches, from A to G, that appear in a given text, such as a letter or poem. As the performer recites the text, they simultaneously realize the corresponding pitches.

When Tao introduced Moellenberg to the work of the late American poet and visual artist Bernadette Mayer, he selected her 2015 poem *Leg of Lamb* as the basis for a compo-

sition using this process. Thus the first two lines (“A line/Break could reflect”) “contain” the pitches A-E-B-E-A-C-D-E-E-C. Moellenberg’s initial experiments had been with a French horn, but he adapted the process for the much larger range of the piano so that Tao uses the full expanse of the keyboard as he reads the poem.

Mayer’s poem itself enacts an intriguing interrogation of the art of poetry and how it is processed—whether read or recited—by playing with the tension between “prosaic” language and the artificiality of line breaks. Unexpected corners are rounded, embracing insights into human psychology: “Starting over’s our addiction, a dead/End and where does that leave/Us?”

“It can become quite disorienting as to what the line break itself is doing,” says Moellenberg, “whether rhythmically or in how it re-emphasizes certain ideas or disorients them. She’s very playful about the idea of getting lost.” Part of the challenge for the performer is to play the pitches “that land inside those words, as you read it plainly. The act of smoothing over your voice and not making it stilted to accommodate your playing is itself very difficult.” Tao points out that the “rhythms are contingent on the pianist’s speech, and thus change in every performance.”

The act of breaking a line of poetry, moreover, is a metaphor for imposing caesuras in performance time—whether a musical phrase or a break between one composer and another. Even an intermission can be seen as a kind of “line break.” Mayer’s poem thus has special appeal for Tao, “because it makes me reflect on my own programming.”

Maurice Ravel***Gaspard de la nuit***

“There’s something that seems not of this world to me,” says Tao of Fulmer’s music, “something that feels extremely celestial.” This in turn led him to associations with “fantastical elements” and to Maurice Ravel’s

1908 *Gaspard de la nuit* in particular, since he finds a “sonic continuity” between the two pieces. A year after the death of Aloysius Bertrand (1807–1841), the pen name of the French poet who straddled Romanticism and Symbolism ahead of his time, a collection of his prose poems appeared under the title *Gaspard of the Night: Fantasies in the Manner of Rembrandt and Callot*. Their tone of macabre fantasy and hallucination inspired Ravel—a composer keenly attracted to fairy-tales in all their dimensionality—and he selected three as the basis for his suite. The tripartite design resembles a three-movement sonata with a flashy opening, a slow central movement, and an all-out rallying of forces in the finale.

“Ondine” depicts a water nymph attempting to seduce a mortal to her realm. Ravel marries his alluring melody to intricately textured, shimmering figurations that lead to a climax, ending the piece with a depiction of the nymph bursting into laughter and vanishing “in a sudden shower.” The Gothic “Le gibet” chillingly paints the image of a man’s corpse still hanging from the gibbet against a desert background. Ravel structures the piano’s figurations around an endlessly repeated B-flat representing “the bell that tolls from the walls of a city, under the horizon.”

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Conrad Tao has appeared worldwide as a pianist and composer and has been dubbed “the kind of musician who is shaping the future of classical music” by *New York Magazine*, and an artist of “probing intellect and open-hearted vision” by the *New York Times*. Tao has performed as soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, and Boston Symphony. As a composer, his work has been performed by orchestras throughout the world; his first large scale orchestral

The poetic source for the longest piece of the suite, “Scarbo,” recalls the spooky narratives of E.T.A. Hoffmann with its depiction of the apparition of a mischievous goblin as a kind of night terror. The final intermezzo from Brahms/Op. 118, which bookmarks the program, sublimates the *Dies irae* motif but reaches a more-resigned rapprochement with death.

A paradox is embedded in these “three Romantic poems of transcendental virtuosity,” as Ravel described them. On the technical level, Ravel’s demands make *Gaspard* (above all the third piece, “Scarbo”) among the most terrifyingly difficult works in the piano literature. Yet the point of this virtuosity is, on another level, to transcend the purely musical, aspiring to a novel synthesis of impulses from other disciplines: “to say with notes what a poet expresses with words,” as Ravel remarked.

—Thomas May

Thomas May is a writer, critic, educator, and translator. Along with essays regularly commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony, the Juilliard School, the Ojai Festival, and other leading institutions, he contributes to the New York Times and Musical America and blogs about the arts at www.memeteria.com.

work, *Everything Must Go*, received its world premiere with the New York Philharmonic, and its European premiere with the Antwerp Symphony, and he was the recipient of a New York Dance and Performance “Bessie” Award, for Outstanding Sound Design/Music Composition, for his work on *More Forever*, in collaboration with dancer and choreographer Caleb Teicher (seen here at Cal Performances in January/February 2022). He is also the recipient of the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant and was named a Gilmore Young Artist—an honor

awarded every two years highlighting the most promising American pianists of the new generation.

During the current season, Tao makes his subscription debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra performing Gershwin's Concerto in F major with James Gaffigan. He also re-unites with the New York Philharmonic to perform Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 17, following his curated program for them last season as part of the Artist Spotlight series, and is presented in recital by the Cleveland Orchestra. Meanwhile, he celebrates the 100th anniversary of *Rhapsody in Blue*, giving performances of the work at the Philharmonie in Berlin, the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam with Matthias Pintscher and the Kansas City Symphony. He has also written a new companion piece to the work commissioned by the Santa Rosa Symphony, Aspen Music Festival, and Omaha Symphony. His return engagements include performances with the Cincinnati Symphony, Oregon Symphony, and Seattle Symphony, whom he play-directs in *Conrad Tao's Playlist*, weaving Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 24 into an adventurous program of Stravinsky, Purcell, Linda Catlin Smith, and Morton Feldman. As part of the celebration of Rachmaninoff's 150th birthday, Tao brings *Rachmaninoff Songbook* to the 92NY and Germany's Klavierfestival Ruhr, presenting a direct line from Rachmaninoff to the music of Billy Strayhorn, Harold Arlen, and Stephen Sondheim.

In a concert curated by Tao himself, Tao invites UK-based new-music collective Distractfold to make their NYC debut at Kaufman Music Center with the world

premiere of Andrew Greenwald's *A Thing Made Whole VIII* along with music by Jürg Frey, Hanna Hartman, and Mauricio Pauly. This season also includes performances with dancer Caleb Teicher in the duo's *Counterpoint* program, which synthesizes the two seemingly disparate art-forms of piano and tap dance. Additional collaborations include a multi-city tour throughout the season with the Junction Trio, including a program of John Zorn, Ives, and Beethoven at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, and the trio's Detroit debut, among many others.

A Warner Classics recording artist, Tao's debut disc *Voyages* was declared a "spiky debut" by the *New Yorker's* Alex Ross. Of the album, *NPR* wrote: "Tao proves himself to be a musician of deep intellectual and emotional means." His next album, *Pictures*, with works by David Lang, Toru Takemitsu, Elliott Carter, Musorgsky, and Tao himself, was hailed by the *New York Times* as "a fascinating album [by] a thoughtful artist and dynamic performer...played with enormous imagination, color and command." His third album, *American Rage*, featuring works by Julia Wolfe, Frederic Rzewski, and Aaron Copland, was released in the fall of 2019. In 2021, Tao and the brass quartet The Westerlies released *Bricolage*, an album of improvisations and experiments recorded in a small cabin in rural New Hampshire in June 2019.

Tao was born in Urbana, Illinois in 1994. He has studied piano with Emilio del Rosario in Chicago and Yoheved Kaplinsky in New York, and composition with Christopher Theofanidis.

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Leg of Lamb

by Bernadette Mayer

A line

Break could reflect

The way the sun breaks

Through the clouds or breakfast

Or, this rainbow begins here

And then's over

There

The aurora borealis can be

All over the sky

Wherever you look

Not in one place

Like north

Up and down

East and west, southwest

Side-saddle, acrobatic as a squirrel

A parhelion (sun pillar) appears

On each side of the sun in cities

Is an e-mail directional?

I guess I'll just think

And be as smart as in dreams

So they won't come to get me

And take me away to

Zanzibar, the mental asylum, the hospital

The jail, turn the line'n you wind up in

Antarctica Australia Mesoamerica

mesothelioma

The middle of nowhere somewhere

You've left all the slush

Behind back there where the line begins,

ends

Do we notice? Yes

Are we sorry? No, maybe, always

Sometimes never we will never come

to an end because

Starting over's our addiction, a dead

End and where does that leave

Us?

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from *Gaspard de la nuit*
Aloysius Bertrand

Ondine

Je croyais entendre
Une vague harmonie enchanter mon
sommeil,
Et près de moi s'épandre un murmure
pareil
Aux chants entrecoupés d'une voix triste
et tendre.

—Charles Brugnot,
Les deux génies

Écoute! – Écoute! – C'est moi, c'est Ondine
qui frôle de ces gouttes d'eau les losanges
sonores de ta fenêtre illuminée par les
mornes rayons de la lune; et voici, en robe
de moire, la dame châtelaine qui
contemple à son balcon la belle nuit étoilée
et le beau lac endormi.

Chaque flot est un ondin qui nage dans le
courant, chaque courant est un sentier qui
serpente vers mon palais, et mon palais est
bâti fluide, au fond du lac, dans le triangle
du feu, de la terre et de l'air.

Écoute! – Écoute! – Mon père bat l'eau
coassante d'une branche d'aulne verte, et
mes sœurs caressent de leurs bras d'écume
les fraîches îles d'herbes, de nénuphars et
de glaïeuls, ou se moquent du saule caduc
et barbu qui pêche à la ligne.

Sa chanson murmurée, elle me supplia de
recevoir son anneau à mon doigt, pour être
l'époux d'une Ondine, et de visiter avec elle
son palais, pour être le roi des lacs.

Et comme je lui répondais que j'aimais une
mortelle, boudeuse et dépitée, elle pleura
quelques larmes, poussa un éclat de rire, et
s'évanouit en giboulées qui ruisselèrent
blanches le long de mes vitraux bleus.

I thought I heard
A faint harmony that enchants my sleep.

And close to me radiates an identical mur-
mur
Of songs interrupted by a sad and tender
voice.

—Charles Brugnot,
The Two Spirits

Listen! – Listen! – It is I, it is Ondine who
brushes drops of water on the resonant
panes of your windows lit by the gloomy
rays of the moon; and here in gown of wa-
tered silk, the mistress of the chateau gazes
from her balcony on the beautiful starry
night and the beautiful sleeping lake.

Each wave is a water sprite who swims in
the stream, each stream is a footpath that
winds towards my palace, and my palace is
a fluid structure, at the bottom of the lake,
in a triangle of fire, of earth and of air.

Listen! – Listen! – My father whips the
croaking water with a branch of a green
alder tree, and my sisters caress with their
arms of foam the cool islands of herbs, of
water lilies, and of corn flowers, or laugh at
the decrepit and bearded willow who
fishes at the line.

Her song murmured, she beseeched me to
accept her ring on my finger, to be the
husband of an Ondine, and to visit her in
her palace and be king of the lakes.

And as I was replying to her that I loved a
mortal, sullen and spiteful, she wept some
tears, uttered a burst of laughter, and van-
ished in a shower that streamed white
down the length of my blue stained glass
windows.

Le gibet

Que vois-je remuer autour de ce Gibet?

—*Faust*

Ah! ce que j'entends, serait-ce la bise nocturne qui glapit, ou le pendu qui pousse un soupir sur la fourche patibulaire?

Serait-ce quelque grillon qui chante tapi dans la mousse et le lierre stérile dont par pitié se chausse le bois?

Serait-ce quelque mouche en chasse sonnante du cor autour de ces oreilles sourdes à la fanfare des hallali?

Serait-ce quelque escarbot qui cueille en son vol inégal un cheveu sanglant à son crâne chauve?

Ou bien serait-ce quelque araignée qui brode une demi-aune de mousseline pour cravate à ce col étranglé?

C'est la cloche qui tinte aux murs d'une ville sous l'horizon, et la carcasse d'un pendu que rougit le soleil couchant.

The Gibbet

What do I see stirring around that gibbet?

—*Faust*

Ah! that which I hear, was it the north wind that screeches in the night, or the hanged one who utters a sigh on the forked gallows?

Was it some cricket who sings lurking in the moss and the sterile ivy, which out of pity covers the floor of the forest?

Was it some fly in chase sounding the horn around those ears deaf to the fanfare of the halloos?

Was it some scarab beetle who gathers in his uneven flight a bloody hair from his bald skull?

Or then, was it some spider who embroiders a half-measure of muslin for a tie on this strangled neck?

It is the bell that tolls from the walls of a city, under the horizon, and the corpse of the hanged one that is reddened by the setting sun.

Scarbo

Il regarda sous le lit, dans la cheminée,
 dans le bahut;
 – personne. Il ne put comprendre par où il
 s'était
 introduit, par où il s'était évadé.

—Hoffmann, *Contes nocturnes*

Oh! que de fois je l'ai entendu et vu,
 Scarbo, lorsqu'à minuit la lune brille dans
 le ciel comme un écu d'argent sur une
 bannière d'azur semée d'abeilles d'or!

Que de fois j'ai entendu bourdonner son
 rire dans l'ombre de mon alcôve, et grincer
 son ongle sur la soie des courtines de mon
 lit!

Que de fois je l'ai vu descendre du
 plancher, pirouetter sur un pied et rouler
 par la chambre comme le fuseau tombé de
 la quenouille d'une sorcière!

Le croyais-je alors évanoui? le nain
 grandissait entre la lune et moi comme le
 clocher d'une cathédrale gothique, un
 grelot d'or en branle à son bonnet pointu!

Mais bientôt son corps bleuissait, diaphane
 comme la cire d'une bougie, son visage
 blémissait comme la cire d'un lumignon—
 et soudain il s'éteignait.

Scarbo

He looked under the bed, in the chimney,
 in the cupboard; – nobody. He could not
 understand how he got in, or how he es-
 caped.

—Hoffmann, *Nocturnal Tales*

Oh! how often have I heard and seen him,
 Scarbo, when at midnight the moon
 glitters in the sky like a silver shield on an
 azure banner strewn with golden bees.

How often have I heard his laughter buzz
 in the shadow of my alcove, and his finger-
 nail grate on the silk of the curtains of my
 bed!

How often have I seen him alight on the
 floor, pirouette on one foot and roll
 through the room like the spindle fallen
 from the wand of a sorceress!

Did I think him vanished then? the dwarf
 appeared to stretch between the moon and
 myself like the steeple of a gothic cathe-
 dral, a golden bell wobbling on his pointed
 cap!

But soon his body developed a bluish tint,
 translucent like the wax of a candle,
 his face blanched like melting wax—
 and suddenly his light went out.