

Programme Note by Chris Darwin: please use freely for non-commercial purposes

Richard Strauss (1864 – 1949) String Sextet from *Capriccio* (1941)

Strauss's last opera *Capriccio* opens with this sextet being performed on stage. We are in the Countess Madeleine's château and her suitor Flamand has just composed the piece for her. A heated argument follows between Flamand and his rival suitor, the poet Olivier. They cannot agree on which is the greater – poetry or music? The Countess is as undecided between the two arts as she is between her two suitors, and after the two-and-a-half hours of the opera, she is still undecided. Of course, she wants both.

If any piece could persuade you that the correct answer is “Music”, then this 13-minute sextet is quite possibly it. So please just enjoy it and be glad that, unlike the Countess, you don't have to choose between poetry and music.