The Hue of C Major

Three works, three composers, three different musical worlds — from Baroque Germany, through twentieth-century France, to contemporary America. What brings them together? Well, perhaps not quite C Major itself, but at least the same key signature: no sharps, no flats.

The programme begins with the music attributed to J. S. Bach, whose Flute Sonata in C Major, BWV 1033 offers a world of clarity, balance and elegance. Its flowing melodic lines, lively passages and graceful dance movements reflect the distinctive character of Baroque chamber music. Beneath its apparent simplicity lies a refined musical structure, where every phrase has its place.

From Bach's ordered musical language, we enter the world of Olivier Messiaen's Le Merle Noir (The Blackbird). Written in 1952 as a test piece for the Paris Conservatoire, the work draws inspiration from birdsong, transforming the blackbird's calls into an imaginative musical landscape.

Finally, Lowell Liebermann's Sonata, Op. 23, brings a different kind of intensity. Written in 1987, this two-movement work moves between lyrical introspection and brilliant virtuosity. Its rich harmonic language, dramatic contrasts and demanding flute writing showcase the expressive and technical possibilities of the modern instrument.

From the purity of Bach, to the untamed voice of the blackbird, to the vibrant colours of Liebermann, these works reveal how differently a seemingly simple musical starting point can be interpreted. Perhaps C Major is not just a key, but a canvas — one that each composer fills with an entirely different hue