Programme Notes

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791)

Concerto for Flute and Harp in C Major, K. 299 (1778)
I. Allegro

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was an Austrian composer and one of the most influential figures of the Classical period, renowned for his melodic elegance, clarity of expression, and refined sense of musical balance.

Composed in Paris in 1778, Mozart's *Concerto for Flute and Harp in C Major, K. 299* was commissioned by the Duke of Guînes, an amateur flautist, for himself and his daughter, a talented harpist and one of Mozart's composition students during his stay in Paris. It remains Mozart's only completed concerto featuring the harp as a solo instrument.

The first movement, Allegro, showcases a lively and graceful musical dialogue between the flute and harp. Rather than treating the two instruments as separate soloists, Mozart allows their contrasting timbres to complement one another through playful exchanges, elegant melodies, and delicate ornamentation. The flute brings a light, singing quality, while the harp adds a delicate yet luminous character through its cascading arpeggios, shimmering runs, and graceful ornamental passages, creating a balanced interplay between the two instruments. The movement captures the elegance and clarity characteristic of Mozart's Classical style while highlighting the expressive possibilities of the harp.

Germaine Tailleferre (1892 - 1983)

Sonata pour harpe (1953)

Germaine Tailleferre was a French composer and the only female member of the group of composers known as *Les Six*, who became prominent in early twentieth-century Paris. Having studied the harp herself, Tailleferre developed a particular understanding of the instrument, which is reflected in her writing for both solo harp and orchestra.

Her Sonata pour harpe was commissioned in 1953 by the renowned Spanish harpist Nicanor Zabaleta, following the success of her earlier *Concertino for Harp and Orchestra*. Dedicated to Zabaleta, the sonata was revised and published in 1957. The three-movement work combines contrasting musical characters with a distinctive blend of French elegance and rhythmic vitality.

The opening Allegretto is lively and playful, while the Lento introduces a more lyrical atmosphere shaped by a gentle habanera rhythm, a dance form originating in Cuba that later became associated with Spanish musical traditions. The final Perpetuum Mobile brings the sonata to an energetic conclusion with its

sparkling character, continuous motion, and technically demanding passages, showcasing the performer's agility and precision. Together, the three movements reveal Tailleferre's imaginative approach to the harp, balancing expressive lyricism with technical brilliance.

Jean-Michel Damase (1928 - 2013)

Sicilienne variée (1966)

Jean-Michel Damase was a French composer, pianist, and conductor who grew up in a musical family. His mother, Micheline Kahn, was a renowned harpist, and the instrument remained an important presence throughout his musical life. His early interest in the harp was reflected in his compositions, including a quintet for flute, harp, violin, viola, and cello, which earned him first prize in composition at the Paris Conservatoire at the age of nineteen.

Published in Paris by Éditions Henry Lemoine in 1966, *Sicilienne variée* draws inspiration from the graceful, gently swaying character of the traditional Sicilienne dance. Through a series of variations, Damase explores a range of musical characters through changes in rhythm, texture, articulation, and expression. While the flowing and elegant character of the original theme is maintained throughout the work, each variation introduces a different musical character, showcasing the harp's expressive range from delicate, lyrical passages to brilliant and virtuosic writing. The piece reflects Damase's intimate understanding of the instrument and his characteristic blend of French elegance and melodic charm.