Programme Notes

Guillaume Balay (1871–1943)Petite Pièce Concertante

French cornetist, bandmaster, and composer Guillaume Balay served as the leader of the prestigious Musique de me la Garde Républicaine. Written as a contest piece (morceau de concours) for the Paris Conservatoire, Petite Pièce Concertante displays Balay's deep understanding of brass lyricism and agility. The work opens with a noble, declamatory introduction that leads into an expressive lyrical melody, allowing the soloist to demonstrate vocal quality and tone color.A subsequent faster section introduces lively rhythm and crisp articulation, showcasing technical dexterity before bringing the piece to a brilliant, triumphant conclusion.

Guillaume Balay (1871–1943)Andante et Allegro

Also composed as an official examination piece for the Paris Conservatoire in the early 20th century, Andante et Allegroremains a staple of the trumpet's classical repertoire. As the title suggests, the piece is structured into two contrasting sections. The Andante opens with a rich, nostalgic theme, giving the performer space for expansive phrasing, rubato, and lyrical expression. Transitioning seamlessly into the Allegro, the mood shifts dramatically to one of sparkling energy,characterized by rapid scalar passages, rhythmic precision, and vibrant fanfare motifs that highlight the brilliant timbre of the instrument.

Jean Pennequin (1864–1914)Morceau de Concert

Jean Pennequin was an influential French musician and composer active in late 19th- and early 20th-century Paris. His Morceau de Concert was written specifically for the annual competitions at the Paris Conservatoire, serving as a rigorous test of both expressive depth and technical virtuosity. The work features dramatic contrast: expansive, romantic cantabile lines that require seamless breath control, juxtaposed with rapid, virtuosic passages and sharp rhythmic figures. Through its rich harmonic language and dynamic contours, Morceau de Concert reflects the elegant French Romantic style of its era.

Gabriel Parès (1860–1934)Fantaisie Caprice

Gabriel Parès was a key figure in French military music, succeeding Guillaume Balay's predecessor as director of the Musique de la Garde Républicaine. Renowned for his seminal method books and scale studies, Parès brought his profound technical mastery to Fantaisie Caprice. The piece is a quintessential showcase of French brass writing,combining playful improvisatory freedom with structured virtuosity. It begins with a lyrical, cadence-like opening that leads into a series of intricate variations, fast arpeggiated runs, and crisp staccato passages. Fantaisie Caprice places high demands on the soloist’s flexibility and lightness of touch, bringing the programme to a captivating and high-energy finale.