

PREFACE

For many years there has been a great need for a book such as *The Modern Harp*, written by the admirable artist Lucia Bova. While there is a large bibliography concerning the harp, what was lacking was an overall view of the instrument's history and technique, including the most recent innovations of the present day. Furthermore, without in any way detracting from its value, this book goes some way towards meeting today's need for general treatise of orchestration, that would take on the unheard-of difficulties involved in ordering and summarizing the extraordinary developments in instrumental research in the last 50 or 60 years. An excellent bibliography already exists concerning several solo instruments, which is certainly a step in the right direction. Among them we can now count this extensive treatise on the harp, whose minute detail and clear exposition will soon make it essential reading.

I spoke of the need for this book such as this, and I repeat myself. It is not only an extraordinarily useful text for those who wish to become acquainted with the mechanical and technical aspects of the instrument (all of its historical vicissitudes included). It also stimulates the creative imagination, bringing together in an orderly fashion the innumerable possibilities that the harp has to offer. Thus, even more importantly, it allows us to deepen our knowledge of the instrument.

In my opinion the harp ranks among the most versatile instruments ever invented. This versatility, or flexibility, paradoxically derives from the archaic nature of its most elementary mechanism: a string plucked by a finger. Behind this apparent simplicity lies an extraordinary power to stimulate the musician's imagination: when our hands come into contact with a string, the door to both music and science opens wide. The age-old history of this contact – one should perhaps say “encounter” – and its extraordinary developments (not to mention its unpredictable future, which we must bear in mind) are laid out by Luca Bova in all of their details, revealing her thorough knowledge and, if I may use the word, love of the instrument. Her text almost reads like an adventure novel; needless to say, this takes nothing away from its professional rigour. Personally, I confess that this book may well become a reference text for me, and, beyond any doubt, will remain a frequent and well-loved companion on my work table.

My warmest thanks go to Lucia Bova for having offered us the fruit of her many years of effort, study, dedication and enthusiasm for an instrument that has been and is a privileged medium for music making, from the most ancient times up to today's most radical experimentation. The history and the evolution of the harp are like a wonderful rainbow that, just like those produced by nature herself, has no visible beginning nor end.

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