

*The modern harp: The writing and notation, the instrument and repertoire from the XVIth century to contemporary* by Lucia Bova. Foreword by Luis de Pablo. Milan: Suvini Zerboni Editions, 2008. In Italian. 617 pages.

This book fills a gap, especially in regards to "new" music. Bova, a strong contemporary music advocate, describes the development of idiomatic harp writing, tracing key moments in a historical arc that begins in the sixteenth century to now. She writes: "to discover the characteristic features of the idiomatic language of the harp it's important to draw near to the instrument with curiosity ... This text is intended as a guide to re-finding the voice of this instrument." There are three main parts. Chapters I-III: After a short historical introduction, Bova's aim is clear: repertory and way of composing for harp are the basis for her work. Numerous musical examples, with analysis of the music for the harp from the beginning of the last century, focused on Carlos Salzedo and his influence on the way to conceive harp music. Solo and chamber works as well as orchestral works by Boulez, Maderna, Stravinsky, Varèse, and Webern, among others, are presented. For those who want to know (better) some of the contemporary Italian masterpieces, a deep analysis of Berio's *Sequenza*, Donatoni's *Marches*, and Petrassi's *Flou* will be very useful. Chapter IV-VIII: This second part introduces the instrument and is very helpful for composers and arrangers, supported with musical examples and the best way to do them. It gives suggestions about writing for harp, focusing on good ways of writing with results, showing also bad solutions and giving a wide range of samples. Chapter IX (200 pages!) gives a detailed look at new ways of performing, with explanations of abbreviation signs, notation examples, and technical charts. Each sign is explained how to be performed and the resulting sound. Some audio samples can be found at: [luciabova.it/arpa\\_moderna.htm](http://luciabova.it/arpa_moderna.htm). There is a short technical table explaining the difficulty, the effect, the preparation time, leading to a conscious choice for those who want to write for harp. The book also has bibliographical and explanatory notes that could be very useful for further study. Bova's book is of interest to students, professionals, musicologists, teachers and composers. The vast quantity of information and the wide span of time covered will probably make the book difficult to replace in the future. I wish that it will be soon translated and enrich the libraries of harpists, composers, and harp lovers. Brava, Lucia!!!

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