

PREFACE

For many years there had been a great need for a book such as *The Modern Harp*, written by the accomplished harpist Lucia Bova. While there is a large bibliography concerning the harp, as yet no synthetic account of the instrument's history and technique, including the most recent innovations of the present day, had been written. Furthermore, this book goes some way towards filling today's lack of a 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. This extensive treatise on the harp can now be counted among them, in all its minute detail and clear exposition, which 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 mechanics and the working modes 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 original 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 both to 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 Lucia 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 her 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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