



Flute Music from the Harlequin Years

**ANTHEIL • AURIC • BRÉVILLE • DUKAS
HARSÁNYI • HONEGGER • IBERT • MILHAUD
POULENC • ROUSSEL • TANSMAN**

**Thies Roorda, Flute and Piccolo
Alessandro Soccorsi, Piano**



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|----------|--|-------------|--|-------------|
| 1 | Pierre de BRÉVILLE (1861–1949)
Une flûte dans les vergers* (1920) | 9:21 | Jacques IBERT (1890–1962)
Jeux (version for flute and piano)
(1923) | 5:08 |
| | | | 5 I. Animé | 2:37 |
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La plainte, au loin, du faune...
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(arr. for flute and piano
by Gustave Samazeuilh) | 5:05 | 6 II. Tendre | 2:29 |
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***WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

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The pamphlet *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* that Jean Cocteau published in 1918 would generate significant upheaval in French music. Cocteau attacked both Wagner and Debussy, writing, 'Impressionism is a Wagnerian backlash...one may not lose oneself in the fog of Debussy as in the mist of Wagner...' The alternative for Wagnerian Romanticism and Debussy's Impressionism would have to be a new simplicity, a sober style. The pleasure and aesthetics of the circus and the music hall served as an example for this new music. As Jean Cocteau wrote, 'Enough of clouds, of waves, of aquariums, of Ondines, and of odours of the night; we need a music on the ground, a music of every day...' The music had to be authentically French; after all, '*le Coq*' was the national symbol of France. As poet Apollinaire said: 'Important thoughts don't need "important" language'.

In 1920 Henri Collet wrote the article *Un livre de Rimsky et un livre de Cocteau – les Cinq Russes, Les Six Français et Erik Satie*. In this he compared the Russian Five with the six Frenchmen (Milhaud, Honegger, Auric, Durey, Tailleferre and Poulenc) with whom Cocteau regularly collaborated. It would mean the baptism of the *Groupe des Six*. However, above all the six composers shared friendship, and to a lesser extent a particular artistic programme.

The First World War had plunged Europe into a state of moral and material upheaval which was leading to a re-evaluation of social and cultural norms that had been taken for granted. Shortly after the war, Roussel wrote about this to his wife, saying: 'We are going to start living all over again, with a new conception of life, which is not to say that everything before the war will be forgotten, but that everything after it will have to be made differently.' It was not only Roussel that was of the opinion that a radical change must be promoted. Ravel's composing also led after the war to his '*style dépouillé*' ('denuded style').

The social function of music had to change. More reflection of everyday life, less pomposity. Simplicity in expression was a necessity. Titles such as *Rugby* (Honegger), *Machines agricoles* (Milhaud) and *Musique d'ameublement*, by Milhaud and Satie, met with astonishment. Alongside tonality arose bitonality and polytonality. There was also a hankering after old modes. The jazz the American army had brought with it to Europe began to assert itself in the composition of European music, and composers were quick to borrow titles such as *Ragtime* (Stravinsky) and *Foxtrot* (Auric).

The innovations affected not only French musicians. Foreign composers such as Copland, Piston, Villa-Lobos, Falla, Antheil,

Quincy Porter, Tansman, Martinů and Casella studied or worked in Paris in the 1920s, and each of them had to decide on his approach with regard to the new ideas.

Inspired by Nichols' excellent book *The Harlequin Years*, this release presents a number of works written in these turbulent times. But it also includes what preceded this period, and explores where it led. The album therefore begins with two works from exponents of the strict *Schola Cantorum*, who were staunch Wagner aficionados. The release ends with Antheil's *Sonata*, that demonstrates that the influences of the wild Parisian years did not prevail.

Pierre de Bréville (1861–1949) was a student of César Franck and Théodore Dubois. He was a teacher of counterpoint and harmony at the Schola Cantorum and, at the request of Gabriel Fauré, at the Conservatoire de Paris. Bréville was a devotee of Wagner and was influenced by the German Romantic tradition, as was Vincent d'Indy, the director of the Schola, and he also greatly admired Debussy. He is known mainly for his songs. *Une flûte dans les vergers* (1920) is an intimate, imaginative work that deserves a unique place in the flute literature.

Paul Dukas (1865–1935) wrote his *La Plainte, au loin, du faune* (1920) for solo piano. It was his contribution to *Tombeau de Claude Debussy*, a tribute collection comprising ten pieces of music, one each by Dukas, Goossens, Bartók, Schmidt, Stravinsky, Ravel, Roussel,

Falla, Satie and Malipiero. In 1927 Gustave Samazeuilh (1877–1967) made an arrangement for flute and piano: a logical step in view of the references to Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. Dukas, a friend of d'Indy and a fellow student of Debussy at the Conservatoire de Paris, held a '*dédain ironique*' for the urge to be modern. He had no particular sympathy for either the *Groupe des Six* or the Viennese School. Beethoven, Wagner and Franck were his points of reference. He succeeded Widor as teacher of composition at the conservatoire. About *Plainte*, Robert Brussel wrote, 'The citation of the *Prélude* takes on a poignant accent below the tender and heavy harmonies that envelope it like a shroud.'

Albert Roussel (1869–1937) had written in *The Chesterian* in 1919 with a degree of enthusiasm about the composers who a year later would come to be known as the *Groupe des Six*. Even so, he chose to take an independent path. It is difficult to assign a school or aesthetic direction to him, despite his education at the Schola Cantorum, where he would also later become a teacher. Marc Vignal wrote, 'Albert Roussel's evolution has led to a classicism where logic and sensuality are in balance.' Roussel's *Andante et Scherzo, Op. 51* (1934) was dedicated to Georges Barrère, who premiered the work in Milan in that same year with the composer at the piano. The emphasis in the *Andante* is on the harmonic complexity, while the *Scherzo* is marked by nimbleness that forms a sharp contrast to this.

Jacques Ibert (1890–1962) maintained an intensive friendship with Poulenc and Milhaud, just as with the Roussel, who was some 20 years older. Together with Honegger, Ibert composed *L'Aiglon* and *Les Petites Cardinal*. Despite these friendships, Ibert retained his independence. In his chamber music and concertos, Ibert displayed a preference for wind instruments. In the first movement, *Animé*, of his *Jeux* from 1923 he uses the same long–short rhythm as Debussy had done ten years earlier in his work of the same name. The playing here is especially harmonic in nature. With the terms *éclatant* and *en forçant encore le son*, the traditionally pastoral character of the flute is challenged. In this, the use of various articulation tricks is very effective in contrasting with the typically French legato playing of the second movement, *Tendre*. Here the flute and piano play in turns with the increasingly varied melodic material that is accompanied by a perpetuum mobile of Ravelian-style fast notes. At its culmination, the two instruments become involved in a fugue-like rendition.

Arthur Honegger (1892–1955) distinguished himself from the other members of the *Groupe des Six* through a blend of German and French styles. *Danse de la chèvre* was written for Sacha Derek's play *La Mauvaise pensée*. It was premiered by the dancer Lysana in December 1921 at the Nouveau Théâtre. Honegger's autograph is lost and the correct notation is thus open to speculation. His *Vocalise-Étude* (1929)

was written for the final exam in vocal studies at the Paris Conservatoire. The adaptation for flute and piano has been written especially for this album by Rien de Reede.

The *Flute Sonatina, Op. 76* (1922), by Darius Milhaud (1892–1974) was dedicated to Louis Fleury and Jean Wiéner. Fleury encouraged many French composers to write for the flute. Wiéner was a charismatic pianist and was highly adventurous in his programming. In his *Concerts salade* he programmed works by Viennese composers (including Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*), by French contemporaries and jazz. In January 1923, Milhaud's *Flute Sonatina* was included in the programme in the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées at one of the Concerts Wiéner. Was this the first performance? The syncopation used in a blues-like way in this piece is often seen as a homage to Jean Wiéner, who experimented in this direction (*Sonatine syncopée*), but influences from Milhaud's Brazilian years are also eminently audible.

Georges Auric (1899–1983) was described by Albert Roussel as: 'Auric, hardly 14 or 15 years of age, seems to me to be a kind of musical Rimbaud, of exceptional aptitude...' The pamphlet *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* was dedicated to Auric, who also wrote a preface to it. He was known especially for ballet, film and theatre music. Later on he became the director of the Paris Opéra. His great talent for writing simple but very attractive melodies is displayed here through his *Aria* (1927).

Francis Poulenc (1899–1963) augmented the flute repertoire with a *Sonata* so well known that it need not be presented here. What is, however, a surprise is the *Villanelle* (1934) that he composed for a collection of short pieces for pipe for Louise Hanson-Dyer, owner of the music publisher Éditions de L'Oiseau-Lyre, to which Milhaud, Roussel, Auric and Ferroud also contributed.

Polish composer Alexandre Tansman (1897–1986) left his home country at the age of 22 to settle in Paris. There he approached the *Groupe des Six*, Ravel and Roussel. During the Second World War he moved to Hollywood, where he connected with Stravinsky. Milhaud also influenced his composing. The premiere of the *Flute Sonatina* (1926) in the context of the *Société moderne des instruments à vent* was extensively reported by Raymond Petit in *La Revue musicale*. He especially praised the harmonic inventiveness in the *Intermezzo* and stated that the *Foxtrot* was among Tansman's best work.

Tibor Harsányi (1898–1954), Hungarian by birth and a student of Bartók and Kodály, lived in Paris from 1924 onwards. Along with Tansman, Tcherepnin, Mihalovici and Martinů he formed L'École de Paris. In his work Hungarian folk music often played a role: with such teachers this could not have been otherwise! So therefore, for example, we hear a well-known

Hungarian rhythm in the first movement. It is the only work on this album that is written for '*piano et flûte*'. This seems to suggest that the harmonic language used is of great importance. In the first movement he veils the old harmonic functions and gladly connects with Debussy. Listening more intently, jazz connoisseurs will recognize well-known harmonic formulae. The last movement owes its intriguing colour to extended tonality with added tones and parallel fifths.

George Antheil (1900–1959) studied under Ernest Bloch at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. His stay in Paris would be his most illustrious period. Influenced by the Dada movement, he wrote his *Ballet mécanique*, that caused a stir by the use of, among others, ten pianos, anvils and car horns. Back in America, in 1933 he attempted to repeat his successful scandal with the *Ballet mécanique* by hiring in provocateurs. This attempt, however, was not successful. In the end he turned his back on modernist tendencies and returned to neo-Romantic aesthetics. In 1951 he wrote his *Flute Sonata*, in which the wild Parisian years are only occasionally audible but the influence of American folk music all the more so.

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Translation: Gerald Mettam

Thies Roorda

Thies Roorda studied at the Royal Conservatory, The Hague with Paul Verhey and in the United States with the renowned Geoffrey Gilbert. After a long standing orchestral career with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, he now dedicates himself to specific periods of the flute repertoire that are of particular interest to him. His Naxos recordings, such as the complete works for flute by Karg-Elert and works by Widor, have received critical acclaim. Several

composers have dedicated works to Roorda, including Jean Françaix. Of the latter, he recorded the *Divertimento for Flute and Piano* accompanied by the composer himself. In addition, he has also recorded works by, among others, Giacinto Scelsi and Rudolf Escher. Roorda is a passionate teacher, recognised for how he addresses the expressive qualities of the flute and his 'Blow How' approach. He is professor of flute at the Royal Conservatory, The Hague and teaches privately in his studio in Amsterdam. He has taught masterclasses all over Europe, Australia and Canada.

www.thiesroorda.nl



Alessandro Soccorsi

Alessandro Soccorsi graduated from the Conservatorio Alfredo Casella – L'Aquila in 2003. He moved to the Netherlands in 2008 where he studied for his Master's degree at the Royal Conservatory, The Hague. Soccorsi has performed as a soloist and chamber musician with ensembles in many festivals and music events in Italy as well as in the Netherlands. His participation as a soloist in 'The Age of Boulez', organised by the Boulez Foundation, was highly praised. He has also performed as a soloist in the Liszt Festival at the Royal Conservatory (Liszt's *Second Piano Concerto*), in 2013 with the Brabant Orchestra in Mozart's *Piano Concerto in D minor* and in 2016 with the Orchestra Sinfonica Abruzzese performing in the L'Aquila Contemporanea Festival. He has collaborated as an accompanist with musicians such as William Bennett and Sergio Azzolini. He is a chamber music professor at the Royal Conservatory, The Hague.

After the violence and destruction of the First World War, a new musical aesthetic developed in Paris. Following the publication of Jean Cocteau's famous pamphlet *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*, Impressionist influences were denigrated and instead simplicity in expression was promoted. This album of flute music charts this new 'Harlequin' direction, from old school adherent Pierre de Bréville to foreign musicians such as Tansman and Antheil who flocked to the city. Foremost among the exponents are members of the famous *Groupe des Six* whose innovations challenged and changed French wind music forever.

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| | | 22–24 | George ANTIEIL (1900–1959)
Flute Sonata (1951) 12:21 |

***WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

Thies Roorda, Flute • Piccolo 13
Alessandro Soccorsi, Piano 1–6, 8–24

A detailed track list can be found on pages 2 and 3 of the booklet
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