



HARP

Germaine Tailleferre

by Saul Davis Zlatkovsky

Germaine Tailleferre (1892-1983), French composer, is famed as a member of “Les Six,” the group of composers of the mid-20th century. The other members were Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, Georges Auric, Louis Durey, and Artur Honegger. Her style of composing is delicately colored, as if watercolor painting, finely detailed, and based on French classicism with modern touches. Her *Sonate* for harp and the *Concertino* are perhaps well known. Certainly the *Sonate* has long been considered standard literature and is often required in competitions. In these works, her style is facile and pretty, with interesting textures, and often clashing notes, a very busy sort of patterning with lots of close, intersecting and crossing lines.

What is not widely known is that she wrote more works for harp than that, which are only recently being published. Two works now available are *Le Petit Livre de*

Harpe de Madame Tardieu—18 Pieces Breves Pour Harpe and *Sonata alla Scarlatti Pour Harpe*, both published by MusikFabrik. The collection titled *Le Petit Livre* consists of exercises in sight-reading written for use at the Paris Conservatoire, so they are sure to be challenging and interesting.

Wikipedia gives these chamber music titles in their list of her complete works: *Entonnement* for oboe, harp, piano, strings (1969); *Jacasseries* for flute, oboe, clarinet, celesta, harp, strings (1969); *Amertume* for flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, harp, strings (1969). It is not clear if these three titles are chamber works, or works for chamber orchestra.

The *Sonate* has what seem like misprints and definite inconsistencies that make it challenging to interpret. It has always felt to me to be a piece published without adequate proofreading or the working out of its finest details. I have taken a few liberties

in my editing to resolve that, which I find satisfying, but may be controversial to other harpists. The slow movement in particular has long been played in various ways by harpists, and it cannot be played exactly as written without being unacceptably messy. Nevertheless, the *Sonate* has a sure sense of color and is of proven appeal to audiences, and the *Concertino* is inventive and richly colored, and of more substance than is often brought to it.

Saul Davis Zlatkovsky, composer-harpist, studied harp at MacPhail, Macalester College, Tanglewood, Manhattan School of Music and the Salzedo Summer Harp Colony. He lives in Philadelphia and has coached harp students at the Curtis Institute of Music. His compositions have been performed at the American Harp Society Conference and are published by Da Costa Music House and Harpiana Publications. †