

An impressionistic painting of a man and a woman in a forest. The man, on the left, is wearing a white shirt and a dark hat, and is looking towards the woman. The woman, on the right, is wearing a yellow dress and is looking away from the man. The background is a mix of green, yellow, and brown, suggesting a forest setting. The overall style is soft and painterly.

Romance of the Flute & Harp

alto

Philippa Davies
(flute)

Thelma Owen
(harp)

ROMANCE of the FLUTE & HARP

1	Alphonse Hasselmans: <i>La Source</i> , Op. 44	4:10
2	Benjamin Godard: <i>Allegretto</i> , Op. 116	1:52
3	Felix Godefroid: <i>Etude de concert in E-Flat Minor</i> , Op. 193	5:19
4	Gabriel Fauré: <i>Berceuse</i> , Op. 16	3:45
5	Fauré: <i>Impromptu</i> , Op. 86	8:47
6	Franz Doppler: <i>Mazurka de Salon</i> , Op. 16	3:53
7	Felix Mendelssohn arr. anon.: <i>Frühlingslied</i> , Op. 62 No. 6	2:25
8	John Thomas: <i>Bugeilioir Gwenith Gwyn (Watching the Wheat)</i>	4:19
9	Camille Saint-Saëns arr. anon.: <i>Le Cygne (The Swan)</i> , R 125 No. 13	2:47
A	Hasselmans: <i>Feuilles d'automne - Sérénade mélancolique</i> , Op. 45	2:24
B	Georges Bizet: <i>La jolie fille de Perth - Intermezzo</i>	3:30
C	Elias Parish-Alvers: <i>Sérénade</i> , Op. 83	8:02
D	Claude Debussy: <i>Syrinx</i> , L 137	2:34
E	Debussy: <i>Suite bergamasque - Clair de lune</i> , L 82 No. 3	5:25

Philippa Davies, *flute*
Thelma Owen, *harp*

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

The harp and the flute were quintessential instruments in 19th Century salon music. Indeed, flute-playing reached almost epidemic proportions. Stanford records a Dublin Musical Society resolution of about 1850 restricting the number of flutes in the orchestra to 20, and if fewer young ladies took their harps to parties than we like to think, this was because technical advances placed the instrument beyond the range of the amateur. The development of the double-action pedal harp, patented in 1810 by Erard, opened up a wide new world to the gifted and serious concert artist. Ironically, Erard's parallel improvements in the mechanism of the piano led to it superseding the harp as a drawing-room accompaniment to the flute, a process reversed by the transcription on this recording.

The fresh possibilities available to the virtuoso harpist created a huge demand for the new music. The great composers of the period wrote little or nothing for the instrument, and the bulk of the repertoire necessarily consisted of transcriptions, arrangements, and works by the players themselves, who could hardly be blamed for not being gifted and original writers as well as skilful performers. For instance, the Belgian harpist **Alphonse Hasselmans** (1845-1912) attached no great importance to his own compositions, although, of the 50 or so pieces he wrote, *La Source* Op.44 is very attractive in its broad, surging relentlessness. However, his virtuosity was a significant and major force in the revival of harp-playing, and inspired a valuable quantity of compositions. Like Godefroid, John Thomas, Parish-Alvers, and the flautist Doppler, he was first taught by his father.

Benjamin Godard (1849-95) was a celebrated violinist, but his early precocity and fame as a composer seem to have led to a weakening of his self-critical faculties, and much of his music lacks substance, recalling Von Bulow's rather harsh stricture on Mendelssohn: "He began as a genius and ended up as a talent". He is remembered today mainly for the *Berceuse* from the opera *Jocelyn*, and the Suite Op.116 is deservedly popular with flautists. The brief, charming allegro is the first movement of the suite.

The *Concert Study in E flat minor* by **Félix Godefroid** (1818-97) has an almost Schubertian melancholy, and, like his other works, reflects his improvements in the use of the left hand. Godefroid studied with Theodore Labarre and Parish-Alvers, having left the Paris Conservatoire because they were slow to change from the single action to the double action harp. He toured Europe extensively as a virtuoso and his compositions include the Opera *La Harpe d'or*, at which première in Paris he himself played in the wings.

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) was, before Debussy, the most advanced composer of his generation, and one of the first considerable talents to write expressly for the harp. The mature, bold sweep of the *Impromptu* Op.86 which was written in 1904, is far removed from the rather old-fashioned filigree

music of much of the 19th Century repertoire. Both in this piece and in the earlier transcription, the *Berceuse* Op.16 can be heard the harmonic and melodic subtleties so characteristic of this fastidious and exclusive artist.

Franz Doppler (1821 -83) made many concert tours throughout Europe playing lute duets with this equally brilliant younger brother Karl, who, it is believed, played his flute to the left-hand side of his body. Together they also helped form the Hungarian Philharmonic Orchestra, but Franz's main occupation was as principal flautist in theatre orchestras, first in Pest and later at the Court Opera in Vienna, where he also eventually became chief conductor. He was a skilful orchestrator and successful opera and ballet composer, and from 1865 taught flute at the Vienna Conservatory. The *Mazurka* strongly reflects his Polish background.

Superficially, **Felix Mendelssohn** (1809-47) and **Camille Saint-Saens** (1835-1921) have much in common. Both were prodigiously gifted in fields other than music - Mendelssohn as artist, philosopher and writer, Saint-Saens as poet, astronomer, and archaeologist- and both were dazzlingly precocious musicians. Whether had he lived, the well mannered Mendelssohn would have become the grumpy reactionary Saint-Saens became is another matter, They are represented here by transcriptions of well-known pieces. In particular, *Le Cygne*, the only piece from the musical joke *Carnival des animaux* that was allowed by Saint-Saens to be published in his lifetime, reflects the classical serenity they both aspired to.

John Thomas (1826-1913) was a distinguished touring virtuoso who collected among his many titles and honours the appointment as harpist to Queen Victoria, He is said to have played the piccolo at the age of four and certainly won an *Eisteddfod* at 11, two years before entering the Royal Academy of Music. He was a great authority on the music of his native Wales and his valued collection of Welsh Melodies was published in 1862.

Georges Bizet (1838-75) also demonstrated exceptional powers at an early age and entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of nine. Unusually, his parent always intended for him a musical career, and even went so far as to hide his books when he showed too much interest in literature. This charming and familiar *intermezzo* comes from his opera *La jolie fille de Perth*.

Although the dominant school of double-action harp-playing was the French, it was an Englishman, **Elias Parish-Alvers** (1808-49) who was the first and greatest virtuoso and composer for the instrument. He died early of consumption, but in his short life he gained the unstinting enthusiasm of his contemporaries for his phenomenal skill and technical innovations, Berlioz calling him the "Liszt of the harp", His published compositions include over 80 pieces for solo harp, some of fantastic difficulty, for he was constantly pushing back the boundaries of harp technique, even considering the possibility, never realised, of a triple-action harp. No later virtuoso quite approached his

eminence as either player or composer.

The last two works on this recording are by the composer who, more than any other, influenced early 20th century music, **Claude Debussy** (1862-1918). The traditional arpeggio patterns of the left hand of *Claire de Lune*, No.3 of the *Suite Bergamasque*, make it a natural choice for transcription to the harp, this from a man whose piano teacher said "Debussy isn't very fond of the piano but he loves music." *Syrinx*, written in 1912 for Louis Fleury, is the most popular composition for the solo flute repertoire. Like all his later music, it is precisely imagined yet fluid, "there is no theory" he said, "you have merely to listen. Fantasy is the law".

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NOTES ON THE ARTISTS

Philippa Davies has established an international reputation as one of the finest flautists currently performing. A 'first-rate virtuoso,' with 'exceptional eloquence' she has been noted for an 'almost electrical response to technique'. She gives recitals and broadcasts throughout the world at international festivals, whilst performing concertos with many international orchestras and giving master classes from as far afield as China and the USA.

Philippa studied at the Royal College of Music with Douglas Whittaker and later William Bennett and won the Tagore Gold Medal Prize, the National Federation of Music Societies award, the Mozart Memorial Prize and was a Park Lane Group Young Artist..

Philippa plays with the Nash Ensemble and London Winds, the Davies Cole Duo (with Maggie Cole) and her quartet Arpège. She regularly plays as guest principal flute with the main London orchestras: the Royal Philharmonic, the Philharmonia, the English Chamber Orchestra and is a Professor at the Guildhall School of Music.

Philippa's numerous recordings include Mozart's entire original concertos and quartets, Bach's Flute Sonatas with Maggie Cole, Poulenc's Flute Sonata,, Giles Swayne's Winter Solstice Carol for the King's College Choir and solo flute and all William Alwyn's flute music .

Thelma Owen started playing the harp at the age of 12, studying with Tina Bonifacio, then with Marisa Robles while at Surrey University, and then gained a French Government scholarship to study in Paris. She played regularly as principal with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra from 1982-9. Thelma's life-long love of orchestral playing began in the National Youth Orchestra where she met Philippa Davies, and since then they have played together on many occasions.

Thelma also teaches the harp at the Royal Academy of Music, University College Hampstead and privately from her home in Finchley.

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alto

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Phillipa Davies



Thelma Owen