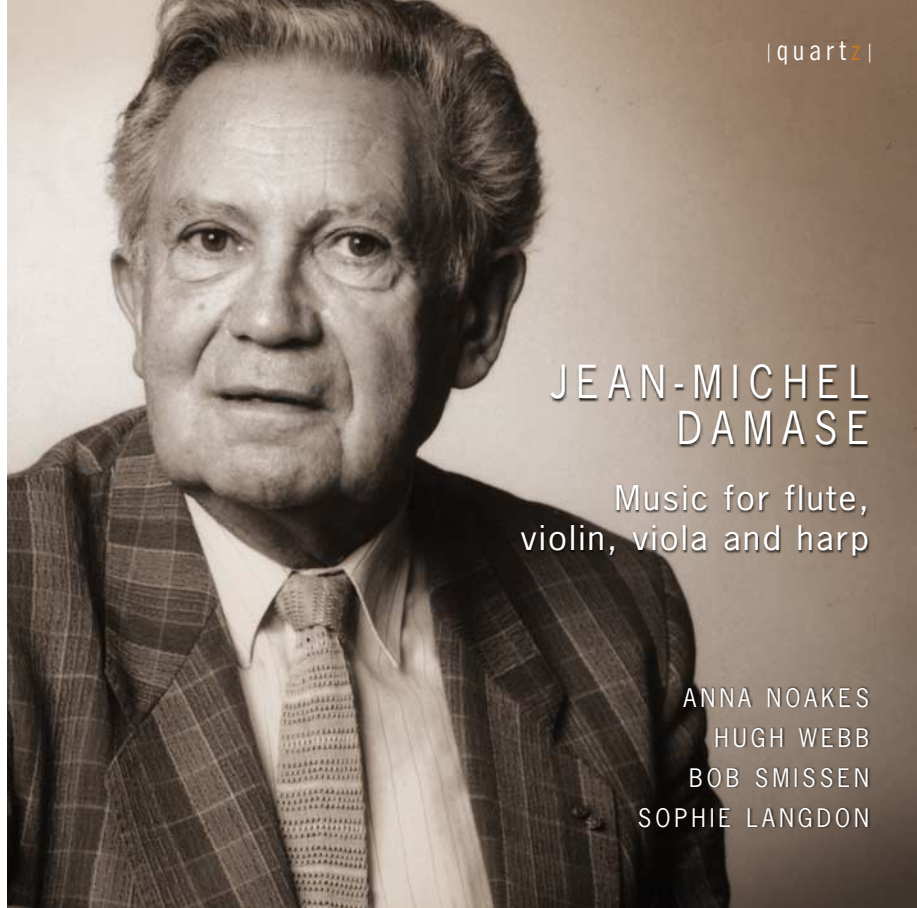




Recorded at Air Studios and Snap Studios, London 2019-2020  
Producers: Fiona Cruickshank and Michael Ponder  
Engineer: Fiona Cruickshank  
Editing: Laurence Anslow  
Mastering: Cicely Balston

|quartz|



# JEAN-MICHEL DAMASE

Music for flute,  
violin, viola and harp

ANNA NOAKES  
HUGH WEBB  
BOB SMISSEN  
SOPHIE LANGDON

# JEAN-MICHEL DAMASE | Chamber Music

DEBUSSY arr. JM DAMASE

## SUITE BERGAMASQUE FOR FLUTE, VIOLA AND HARP

1	Prelude	4'56
2	Menuet	4'39
3	Clair de Lune	4'39
4	Passepied	4'01

## SONATA No.2 FOR FLUTE AND HARP

5	Allegro moderato	5'56
6	Andante	4'37
7	Allegro scherzando	3'03
8	Allegro risoluto	3'58

## SONATA FOR VIOLIN AND HARP

9	Moderato	4'10
10	Allegro vivace	2'21
11	Andante	3'45
12	Allegretto	3'33

## TRIO FOR FLUTE, VIOLA AND HARP

13	Molto moderato – Allegro ma non troppo	4'53
14	Andantino	5'02
15	Allegro vivace	4'15

Total playing time: **63'51**

ANNA NOAKES flute  
ROBERT SMISSEN viola  
SOPHIE LANGDON violin  
HUGH WEBB harp

## Anna Noakes' personal reflections on meeting and working with JM Damase

'I fell in love with the music of Jean Michel very early in my career, one of my debut recordings was dedicated to his chamber music with flute and harp and it was graced with a 'Critics Choice' by *Gramophone*.

Jean Michel wrote to me on the release of that CD, the most beautiful correspondence in such an elegant hand! He kindly agreed to be 'Composer in Residence' for my Flute Summer School, 'A Breath of Fresh Air' two years running, studying and performing all his major works for flute! From the moment I met him from the Eurostar, he took my arm and we were rarely parted during the whole course! He adored working with the students, giving them huge encouragement and genuine compliments! He enjoyed his awakening cup of English tea and although a petite gentleman, he was always impeccably dressed, right down to his brilliant white socks and leather slippers!

He was a 'guest of honour' at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance and this is where I had the wonderful opportunity to play with him at the piano in a recital at the Royal Naval Chapel, a concert to celebrate his wind music!

It was a huge honour for me and I will be forever grateful to have had this wonderful experience!

In 2004 I recorded his Flute Concerto with the BBC Concert Orchestra, he knew the recording was going to happen, but he sadly died just before its release! I have never stopped loving his music, a huge constant in my life and recording his *Rhapsody*, for flute and string orchestra, again with the BBCCO should be due for release in the near future!

A most elegant, gentleman who had a style all of his own, instantly recognisable and so full of exquisite beauty!

### **Jean-Michel Damase: Music for flute, violin, viola and harp**

The inherently civilised music of the composer and pianist Jean-Michel Damase (1928–2013) reflects, to an endearing degree, the combination of subtlety, mastery and – as we hear in this collection – the inspiration and lasting high quality of wind playing in his native France. This inherent quality for long encouraged the country's composers to write with a particularly sensitive ear for the possibilities of wind instruments – few national composers in the twentieth-century could write for such soloists and ensembles with the felicity and natural inspiration as the French exhibited.

Amongst the French composers who were so inspired, perhaps the most significant with regard to chamber music was Debussy, whose writing – particularly for the flute – in turn undoubtedly fired his native successors. Jacques Ibert, Jean Françaix and members of Les Six, as well as Roussel and Guy-Ropartz especially, contributed to the repertoire, and amongst the slightly later generation of French composers for wind instruments the legacy of Jean-Michel Damase occupies a special place.

Additionally for French composers in the earliest years of the twentieth-century, the innovative development of the chromatic harp by the Pleyel company, and the commissions extended by the firm to Debussy and Ravel for compositions for the new instrument, led in turn to a greater interest in writing harp music, particularly its incorporation in chamber works, where its gentler, subtler tones were occasionally considered to be a more suitable partner for solo stringed instruments.

By the time of Jean Michel's birth to musical parents in Bordeaux in 1928, the repertoire for the flute and also for harp amongst French composers was certainly established, not least through the musicianship of the boy's mother, Micheline Kahn (1889–1987), a prominent harpist in France, a friend of Fauré and Ravel (she premiered the latter's *Introduction and Allegro* for harp, flute, clarinet and string quartet) – a fact not lost amongst members of Les Six. It was his mother's mastery of the instrument that inspired the mature composer's notable contributions to the harp repertoire; as a boy, his natural musical gifts first brought his name to the attention of the most prolific composer of Les Six – Darius Milhaud – for, as a nine-year-old solo pianist, the young Damase gave the first performance in 1937 of Milhaud's *Le Tour de L'Exhibition* (revised as the composer's Opus 162 for that year's spectacular cultural Exposition in Paris), leading to a long-lasting friendship, brought to an end by Milhaud's death in 1974. Also, by 1937, Jean-Michel was beginning his career as a composer, setting four poems by Colette – whom he also met.

Although the undoubted musical gifts of the young Jean-Michel were beginning to be noticed by established older French musicians, the boy's interest in original composition was equally remarkable. By the outbreak of World War II, Jean-Michel had entered the Paris Conservatoire to study piano with Alfred Cortot (believed to be Jean-Michel's father) and composition with Armand Ferte, Henri Büsser and Marcel Dupré. In 1943, still only 15, he won the Conservatoire Prize with a unanimous vote from the jury, and by the time of the Libération in 1944 Jean-Michel was being spoken of in glowing terms both for his composition and his pianism.

Three years later, Damase won the Prix de Rome with his cantata *La Belle se reveille*; 1947 also saw the composition of the earliest work in our collection, the Trio for Flute, Viola and Harp, published that year by Henri Lemoine et compagnie, who remained the composer's principal publishers throughout his life.

Damase's Trio soon established itself as one of the most frequently played works for the medium – a medium which had effectively been created by Debussy, whose Sonata for flute, viola and harp was one of six sonatas he planned in his final years; sadly his death prevented the completion of all six, but this work, with sonatas for violin and piano, and for cello and piano, were written before his untimely death in 1918. It is interesting to note that Darius Milhaud played the viola in the first performance of this work towards the end of 1917, at Debussy's home, and was particularly praised by the composer for doing so. No doubt Milhaud would have told young Jean-Michel of his playing for the French master – as he related to the present writer in Paris in 1962.

By the time he left the Conservatoire, Jean-Michel Damase was clearly a young man to watch, but it was not just his compositions that attracted attention: his pianism was of a high concert standard. He later performed as soloist with the leading Parisian symphonic orchestras – those of the French National Radio, the Concerts Colonne and the Paris Conservatoire. He also recorded music by other composers commercially, winning the Grand Prix du Disque for his recording – the first ever integral set – of the complete Fauré *Nocturnes et Barcarolles*. However, following the award, Damase virtually abandoned public performances of piano music by other composers, devoting almost all of his time to original

composition, although he did occasionally make further recordings of his own music.

As will be seen, our collection is made up of four works by Damase, one of which – Debussy's *Suite Bergamasque* – is an arrangement by Jean-Michel of the earlier master's solo piano tribute to the 18th century. Originally dating from circa 1890, Debussy considerably revised and rewrote much of the music for its publication in 1905; it is by no means pastiche and although it deliberately owes much to the 18th century, Debussy's personality emerges strongly from every bar. The transcription by Damase is masterly – indeed, so much so, that if one did not know beforehand, the resultant score could well be taken as an original composition for the medium, a counterpart to the late *Sonate* for the same combination. Although the fame of *Claire de Lune* as a solo piano piece tends to make this movement stand to one side from the other three, such is the natural sympathy and stylisation of Damase's transcription that heard in this instrumentation – in particular the very opening phrase – that one may well be convinced that the music is more suitably expressed through the trio combination – the Moon reflected more expressively through flute and harp, the underlying viola line providing a sense of earthly support.

The Second Sonata for flute and harp is a relatively late work by Damase, having been composed and published in 1998, thirty-four years after the first Sonata for this rare combination. One might query as to why such a combination of suitably-matched instruments has not led to a larger repertoire than that which exists – perhaps the relative uncertainty many composers feel

when writing for solo harp, or the equally relative rarity of the instrument being available in chamber music ensembles, combine to restrict opportunities for performance, but in this beautiful work, as in its predecessor, Damase reveals his inherently civilised approach to original composition, his inspiration undoubtedly fired by the natural combination of the instruments.

The work falls into four movements: *Allegro moderato*, *Andante*, *Allegro scherzando* and *Allegro risoluto*; the first movement is undoubtedly the most discursive of the four, its attractively questioning final phrase leading naturally to the slower central movement in which the emotional depth of the work is initially plumbed before a faster-moving central section adds a subtle continuous variation on that material, the inherently serious expression of the work made clearer, suffused by the final rising flute phrase.

The scherzo-like nature of the third movement lightens the mood slightly, but there clearly are deeper emotions at play, despite the virtuoso flute writing and harp textures that, when heard together, produce an extraordinarily original tracery before the final gesture – the briefest ‘adieu’. These three movements are but the prelude for the remarkably original finale, a movement full of varied yet inherently organic expression. The melodic content is rich and full, the onward-momentum of the music compelling, and the movement as a whole reprises the deeply serious nature of the work, so full of expression and human experience – a genuine masterpiece.

Damase's Sonata for violin and harp dates from 1993, and also has four movements: *Moderato*; *Allegro vivace*; *Andante*; *Allegretto*. It has to be considered a quite unique work, in which the harp part is conceived solely for that instrument (it is very difficult indeed to play that part on the piano – any such change would alter the nature of the work considerably). The Sonata is a genuine duo, its character inherently serious and wholly organic. In this last regard, the first movement assumes a prelude nature, wherein the material is stated, restated and intensely worked, and leading, emotionally, to the quicksilver *Scherzo* – a first ‘in depth’ consideration of the opening thematicism – not so much lighter in nature as urgent. After this brilliantly-conceived movement, the emotional depth of the work, the slow movement, follows: never inherently tragic, the music nonetheless retains a serious expression, a group, perhaps, of extended continuous variations on the opening ideas, the colouration of the two instruments quite brilliantly explored and never over-stated by this admirable composer.

The *Allegretto* finale brings a lighter expression to the music, not only in the material itself, but in the instrumental colours through which it is conveyed, concentrated – as the Sonata moves to its conclusion – in thematic variety which remains fully organic before another brief ‘adieu’ – and the work is over. Our collection concludes with Damase's first published work, the Trio for flute, viola and harp of 1947. In four movements – *Molto moderato*, *Allegro ma non troppo*, *Andantino*, *Allegro vivace* – the work not only immediately declares

what might be termed the style and inherent nature of French art music of the time, a world away from the language and reconstitution of music that several of Damase's contemporaries (Boulez and Amy principally amongst them) were soon to employ – but also the nature and individual character of the teenaged composer, assured and in full command of his material.

This is a first mature composition of which no composer need feel uncertain – the working of the material is such as would have earned the applause of both Debussy and Rousset: in the first movement, Damase's unwillingness to be sidetracked into superficial expression but to concentrate upon the musical issues presented by his material is impressive: here is a real composer, with something to say, our attention further enhanced by the instrumental colouration.

The slow central movement is remarkable for its continuous development of the music's wholly organic thematicism – the manner by which Damase extends his compositional thought is indeed deeply impressive, never so inherently solemn as to abjure an occasional lighter touch. After this wonderful expression, the finale does not provide us with expected full-hearted relief: the pace may be faster, but there are still serious matters at hand in a concentrated movement that moves quickly throughout to its inexorable conclusion – and this early masterpiece is over.

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## Anna Noakes

Anna Noakes, concerto and recording soloist with BBC Concert Orchestra and RNSO has performed at the QEH, Wigmore Hall and Purcell Room as soloist, recitalist and chamber musician as well as at many of Britain's most respected Festivals, such as Cheltenham, Brighton, Leicester, Salisbury, City of London and Dartington.

Her playing has inspired composers such as Simon Holt, Martin Yates, Cecilia McDowall, John Ashton Thomas, Dave Heath and Martin Butler to write for her. Anna has recorded numerous CDs for Dutton, ASV, Naxos and Guild of both solo and chamber music, many of which have received the *Gramophone* coveted "Critics Choice".

Anna broadcasts for BBC Radio3 and Classic FM and works as Guest Principal Flute with the LPO, Philharmonia, RPO, the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House and ENO's together with ECO, Northern Sinfonia, CLS, Locrian Ensemble and Britten Sinfonia.

She is also in demand to record the music for Film and TV, scores that include, *Star Wars*, *Kingsman*, *Golden Circle*, *James Bond*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Stardust*, *Hugo*, *Arthur*,



*Chicken Run, Golden Compass, Black Swan, Narnia series, Harry Potter, Shrek, Da Vinci Code, Bridget Jones and Love Actually* to name a few!

Professor of Flute at Royal Academy of Music and previously at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, Anna has given masterclasses for British Flute Society, Royal College of Music, RNCM, GSMD, DIC Dublin, Cork School of Music and is currently the woodwind coach for both World Youth Orch, LSSO and Cambridge University.

Anna is a founder member of the South American Folk Ensemble 'INCA' and was for ten years the Artistic Director of the Yoxford Arts Festival.

## Hugh Webb

Hugh Webb was Principal Harp in the Philharmonia Orchestra from 2001 to 2012. He has worked extensively in contemporary music and has had pieces written for him with support from Arts Council England by Javier Álvarez, Robert Keely, Paul Archbold and Ian Dearden. Recent CD releases include



Bax's Concerto for Flute, Oboe, Harp and String Quartet with the Academy of St Martin's Chamber Ensemble, a disc of solo and chamber music by Nino Rota, a CD of French Renaissance songs with the medieval group Joglearesa, the complete Sonatas for violin and harp by Spohr and Bax's *Fantasy Sonata*. He gave the first performance of Cyril Scott's *Celtic Rhapsody* as part of Sidonie Goossens' 100th birthday celebrations at Wigmore Hall in 1999. Hugh also performs as a jazz harpist and has given recitals at the European Harp Symposium and the World Harp

Congress. He is active in the commercial world of television, film and popular music, and has composed music for a show for children based on Hans Christian Andersen's *The Snow Queen*. He has given numerous masterclasses throughout the country and has lectured at the Royal Academy of Music, the Paris Conservatoire and the Sweelinck Conservatoire in Amsterdam. Hugh now freelances with all the major London orchestras and frequently appears as Principal Harp in the John Wilson Orchestra.

## Bob Smissen

Bob was raised but an arrow's flight from Sherwood Forest and educated at Chethams and Guildhall schools of music. Within that era were happy years in the European Community Youth Orchestra before being cast into the profession. A short stint in Newcastle with The Northern Sinfonia as a green principal, then back to the smoke and the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields where he has held court as principal viola for over 30 years.

The Academy has afforded Bob such a varied diet of music making all over the globe, including the opportunity to play concertos, chamber music and work with inspirational musicians from many backgrounds and generations. The Pro Arte Piano Quartet, I Musicanti, 'Anna, Bob and Hugh' trio and coaching the next generation are wonderful musical distractions from a life punctuated with too many dogs and a high maintenance wife.....



## Sophie Langdon

SOPHIE LANGDON is one of Britain's leading violinists. She has appeared as soloist with many major orchestras: the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia, BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic and the Berlin Radio Orchestra. She broadcasts regularly for BBC Radio 3, has appeared at most of Britain's music festivals, and is a familiar figure on London's concert platforms. Langdon has broadcast for BBC Radio 3, appeared at most of Britain's music festivals and on London's major concert platforms. Her CD recordings include the Ethel Smyth Concerto for violin and horn on the Chandos label, and two volumes of Spohr violin and harp music with harpist Hugh Webb on the Naxos label – both of which were released to critical acclaim.



Langdon's studies were at the Royal Academy of Music, Juilliard School, Curtis Institute and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She obtained many scholarships and prizes. With Trio Zingara, she was a winner at the Munich International Competition in 1981.

Recognised as a violinist and musician of great versatility, Sophie is active in many different spheres: as chamber player, soloist and recitalist, orchestral leader and director, and teacher. Langdon is Professor of Violin at the Royal Academy of Music.