

A day in the *Berlin International Harp Masterclass*

8:30 - 9:00 a.m. Breakfast

9:00 - 9:45 a.m. Emma Rota (Italy)

Félix Godefroid: Étude de Concert

The piece *Étude de Concert* requires very even execution of the ornaments with the right hand, as well as harmonious balancing of all sounds, in particular in relation to flageolets.

With Emma we worked on refining her technique to reduce incidental noise in particular, as well as on her body posture and tension to improve the quality of sound. The learning process was rounded off with music-organisational work concerning comprehension of the composition and unification of the tempo.

9:45 - 10:30 a.m. Maximilian Treller (Germany)

Isaac Albeniz: Asturias

Georg Friedrich Händel: Concerto for harp in B-flat major

We worked on two pieces with Maximilian: *Asturias*, which he also played at the final concert, and the harp concerto by G.F. Händel. He played the latter in a concert with an orchestra, a few weeks after the masterclass. This is why our work here focussed on organisation when playing with an orchestra, as well as technical execution of baroque ornaments.

Asturias, on the other hand, required work on challenging jumps, rapid note repetitions with minimised incidental noise and partial lifting of the dynamics.

10:30 - 11:15 a.m. Christopher Sabisky (Wales)

Gabriel Pierné: Impromptu-Caprice Op. 9

Among other aspects, it is the form of *Impromptu-Caprice* that makes the piece difficult to play: the contrast between its free beginning and the rhythmical, dance-like middle part require a balancing act, in order to harmoniously connect both parts when interpreting the piece.

We also worked with Christopher on minimising unwanted string noise through delayed positioning of the fingers and more precise pedal operation. The technical parts of the lesson were supplemented with body work, in particular concerning body tension while playing. Work on the harmonious comprehension of the piece also helped to achieve a more balanced interpretation of the entire piece.

11:15 a.m. - 12:00 noon Emma Nagl (Austria)

Nino Rota: Sarabande e Toccata

Rota's Sarabande and Toccata also comprises two strongly contrasting parts: the Sarabande is very lyrical and requires very accurate and quiet placing of the fingers in the lower register, while the Toccata is highly virtuosic and technically challenging in other ways.

Since Emma arrived at the masterclass with a musically very well developed interpretation of the piece, we focussed mainly on technical aspects, such as working on a high tempo and on anticipating large arpeggios. In addition, the force distribution between the left and right hand had to be balanced and generally dynamically lifted.

12:00 noon - 1:30 p.m. Lunch and break

1:30 - 2:15 p.m. Olivia Debrabandere (Belgium)

Guillaume Connesson: Toccata

The piece was written in 2003, making it the most modern piece of this year's masterclass. It is characterised by its extreme rhythmic and virtually percussive elements. A particular challenge is to clearly carve out the melodic fragments from the continuous run of fast notes.

Based on this, the work with Olivia focussed on expanding her awareness of the piece, in order to enable her to interpret it in a way that is as comprehensive for the audience as possible. Further areas of learning included the shaping of sound through different articulation techniques, reduction of incidental noise and maintaining expressive energy over the course of the entire piece.

2:15 -3:00 p.m. Hannah Rabl (Austria)

Ekatarina Walter-Kühne: Fantasy on a theme from the opera Eugen Onegin

This fantasy comprises a mixture of lyrical and highly virtuosic elements and sections that must be presented melodiously and dynamically diverse.

Work on articulation techniques and on producing fuller sounds was particularly important for Hannah, who originally played the single action pedal harp and took up the double action pedal harp quite recently. In addition, dynamic differences were carved out more clearly and lyrical passages were arranged more vocally.

3:00 - 3:45 p.m. Séléna Plain (Switzerland)

Bedřic Smetá: The Moldau (arr. Hans Trneček)

Claude Debussy: Danse sacrée et danse profane

Séléna's interpretation of the Moldau was already so sophisticated that we only did some work on alternative fingering. This is why our work in the masterclass focussed on one of the great standard pieces for the harp: Danse sacrée et danse profane by Claude Debussy.

This virtuosic piece was originally written for the chromatic harp and it is therefore quite a challenge for harpists owing to some extremely complex pedal changes. The execution of the arpeggios is also a controversial issue, and there are even essays written about this topic by harpists from Debussy's time. In addition to advancing the musical comprehension, particular importance was therefore attached to developing the different arpeggio variations.

3:45 - 4:30 p.m. Coffee break

4:30 - 5:15 p.m. Carmen Bernal López (Spain)

Nicolas-Charles Bochsa: 'Zitti Zitti' rondo from The Barber of Seville

Zitti Zitti is a virtuosic piece whose main challenge is its high tempo. In addition, it contains several difficult runs that must be played maintaining a balanced relationship between the left and right hand.

Carmen's accurate playing technique did not require much attention, which was why we focussed mostly on powerful, high-volume play and on increasing the tempo. We also worked on improving stage presence, both during the lessons and in the mid-week performance training session.

5:15 - 6:00 p.m. Ysaline Lentze (Belgium)

Félix Godefroid: Carnaval de Venise

Carnaval de Venise is a charming piece that illustrates the incredibly multifaceted nature of the harp. Extremely fast runs and étouffés, rapid glissandos and trills, as well as extraordinarily high flageolets that approach the limits of what is playable: the variations of the melody that most people are familiar with as 'My Hat, It Has Three Corners' represent virtually all harp playing techniques that were known at the time.

In order to communicate the light, playful character of the piece most effectively despite its enormous tempo, we jointly adapted a few sections. The lessons with Ysaline were rounded off by intense work on musical embellishments and ornaments.

6:30 - 7:00 p.m. Dinner

Followed by:

Barbecues, games nights, performance training, a visit to the Potsdamer Schlössernacht and the final concert.